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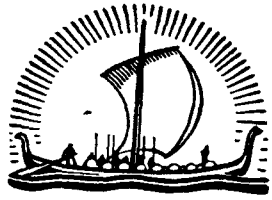

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Lionel Trilling

OUR HAWTHORNE

Henry James's monograph on Hawthorne must always have a special place in American letters if only because, as Edmund Wilson observed, it is the first extended study ever to be made of an American writer. But of course it is kept in the forefront of our interest by more things than its priority. We respond to its lively sense of the American cultural existence and the American cultural destiny, to the vivacity which arises from James's happy certitude that, in describing the career of the first fully-developed American artist, he celebrates the founder of a line in which he himself is to stand preeminent. And we can scarcely fail to be captivated by the tone of James's critical discourse, of a mind informed and enlightened, delighting in itself and in all comely and civilized things; it is the tone of the center, far removed from the parochialism which (together with strength) James imputes to Poe as a critic. For the student of American literature in general the little book is indispensable.

But the student of American literature for whom Hawthorne is a particular concern must experience some degree of discomfort as he reads James on his author. He will be aware that through James's high and gracious praise there runs a vein of reserve, even of condescension. In an attempt to account for this, the student will perhaps reflect that Hawthorne made himself susceptible to condescension, for he was often at pains to avow the harmlessness of his temperament, to dissociate

EDITORS' NOTE: This is a somewhat revised version of the essay which appears as the "Afterword" of *Hawthorne Centenary Essays,* edited by Roy Harvey Pearce and published by the Ohio State University Press. It formed the basis of a lecture delivered at the commemoration of the centenary of Hawthorne's death which was held at Ohio State University on May 15th of this year.

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himself from the fierce aggressions and self-assertions of the literary life; he seems to ask from his readers a tender and cherishing affection rather than the stern regard which we give to the more violent or demonic personalities—or, simply, to the personalities more overtly masculine—whose assault upon us we learn to forgive. Then too, it is not hard to understand that James, in the full pride of his still youthful powers, might have been tempted to slight a predecessor, no matter how truly admired—a predecessor who, although he did indeed show how much could be accomplished in the way of art, did not achieve a body of work which, in bulk and fierce affronting power, equals that which his successor planned for himself in sublime confidence.

But when our student of Hawthorne has canvassed the reasons to be found in the personal circumstances of either man, he is bound to see that something beyond the personal is at work to produce James's reserve or condescension. He will understand that his explanation must ultimately refer to a cultural assumption to which James has given expression. And this assumption, when he examines it, will force upon him the awareness that, in the degree that he feels close to Hawthorne, the breach between his own contemporary culture and that of Henry James is very great. James's little book appeared (in the *English Men of Letters* series) in 1879, and in the time between then and now there has taken place a revision of critical sensibility the extent of which can scarcely be overestimated.

In his third chapter, which deals with *Mosses from an Old Manse* and *Twice-Told Tales,* James sets forth his view of the nature of Hawthorne's artistic enterprise by taking issue with the opinion of Emile Montégut, an able French critic, notable to us for his special and informed interest in American literature. In 1860, in an essay called *"Un romancier pessimiste,"* Montégut had dealt extensively with Hawthorne, representing him as a writer of dark and, indeed, misanthropic mind. He spoke at length of Hawthorne's concern with conscience, sin, and hell, and with "the tortures of a heart closed before man and open to God," subjects for which the descendant of a long line of Puritans would naturally show a predilection. Montégut has but little sympathy to give to the Puritan mentality and he speaks in harsh terms of what he takes to be Hawthorne's exemplification of it, yet it is clear that he understands Hawthorne's dark preoccupation to constitute his chief interest, the very substance of his seriousness.

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To this view James responds with extreme and satiric impatience. He denies the darkness of Hawthorne's mind and in the course of doing so actually seems to deny that it is a serious mind. For he tells us that we must understand Hawthorne's concern with conscience to be largely "ironical." He does not use the adjective in the sense which will occur most naturally to the reader of today, the sense which is cognate with "ambiguous" and suggests a source of emotional power. He intends a meaning of the word which is close to whimsical playfulness. "He is to a considerable extent ironical—this is part of his charm—part, even, one may say, of his brightness; but he is neither bitter nor cynical, he is rarely even what I should call tragical." And James goes on: "There have certainly been story-tellers of a gayer and lighter spirit; there have been observers more humorous, more hilarious—though on the whole Hawthorne's observation has a smile in it oftener than may at first appear; but there has rarely been an observer more serene, less agitated by what he sees, and less disposed to call things deeply into question."

To the religious elements of the stories James gives no credence beyond an esthetic one. Hawthorne, he says, used religion for his own artistic purposes; from the moral life of Puritanism his imagination "borrowed" a "color" and "reflected" a "hue," but he experienced no conviction whatever. James certainly abates nothing in his description of the terrors of Puritanism, of how the "shadow of the sense of sin" could darken the individual life and lead it either to despair or to a catastrophic rebellion. But he is quite certain that Hawthorne was not adversely affected by his Puritan heritage—he did not "groan and sweat and suffer" under it, nor did he throw it off in anger. ". . . He contrived by an exquisite process, best known to himself, to transmute this heavy moral burden into the very substance of his imagination, to make it evaporate in the light and charming fumes of artistic production."

James is unequivocal and emphatic in his belief that Hawthorne's interest in Puritanism was nothing but artistic. He tells us that our author gave his imagination license to "amuse" itself with the faith of his ancestors, to make their morality its "playground"; what for his forebears was the principle of existence, he made into one of his "toys." "The old Puritan moral sense, the consciousness of sin and hell, of the fearful nature of our responsibilities and the savage character of our

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Taskmaster—these things had been lodged in the mind of a man of Fancy, whose fancy had straightway begun to take liberties and play tricks with them—to judge them (Heaven forgive him!) from the poetic and esthetic point of view, from the point of view of irony and entertainment." James has no quarrel with fancy, but he adheres to the Coleridgean doctrine that it is a lesser faculty than the imagination, and although he does not doubt that it is within Hawthorne's capacity to command the imagination, he understands the tales to be chiefly under the control of fancy. ". . . As a general thing," he says, "I should characterize the more metaphysical of our author's short stories as graceful and felicitous conceits."

What are we to do with a judgment of this sort—how are we to escape its embarrassments? It is one of our great masters who speaks, and we hold him to be great not only in the practice of his art but also in its theory. From him many of us learned how high, even sacred, is the mission of the artist, and from him we derived many of the tenets by which we judge success in art. Yet it is he who make this estimate of another of our masters, the one who, of all Americans, was the master of Henry James himself.

I need scarcely detail the ways in which, by our modern judgment, James goes wrong. Yet it will be well to have the prevailing present view explicitly before us, and it could not be more exactly defined than by the existence of the useful volume called *A Casebook on the Hawthorne Question*. The editor of the *Casebook,* Professor Agnes Donohue, has gathered together ten of Hawthorne's best known stories; to each of six of these she has appended two interpretative essays of more or less recent date; following this is a selection of famous critical estimates of our author; and in a series of appendices which includes lists of critical topics for student papers there is a bibliography which, although it is intended to be minimal, runs to thirty-two books and the same number of articles. Why it is that Hawthorne makes a "question" for us and how our literary community has gone about answering what has been posed to us is very clearly explained by the editor in her preface.

> The ten stories and sketches in the Casebook disclose a signal ambiguity in Hawthorne—his attitude toward man's moral nature. Sometimes he seems to assert the depravity of man while at the same time he dreams of an Adamic hero guileless

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> in his prelapsarian Eden. He vacillates between trusting the human heart's intuitions as good and advancing his conviction that the heart is a "foul cavern" which must be destroyed to be purified.
>
> Hawthorne's ambivalence about guilt and innocence can be seen as a lodestone that draws into its magnetic field other problems of human life. He writes of innocents initiated into shrewdness; secret sin and isolation; compulsive rituals of atonement and sacrifice; self-righteousness becoming fanaticism; science confronting original sin; witchcraft and devil worship; carnal knowledge and guiltless love; the search for a home, a father, a self—in short, man's dark odyssey in an alien world.
>
> The ambiguity in Hawthorne's stories is at once his triumph and, for some literalist critics, his failure. The tension it creates is a dramatic asset. Many of the tales or romances as he thought of them, are multi-leveled, ironic explorations of the human psyche—capable of endless extensions of meaning and of stimulating repeated analysis and interpretation.

Comparing the two views of Hawthorne, that of James and the established modern view which Professor Donohue summarizes, we must, in all humility, feel that ours is the right one, or at least, for us, the inevitable one. It recommends itself on its face. No doubt James's ironical entertainer makes a graceful and charming figure as he amuses himself with the toys strewn over the playground of a disused morality. But how can any member of the literary community fail to conclude that there is an intrinsic superiority in the grave, complex, and difficult Hawthorne we have learned to possess, the Hawthorne who represents "man's dark odyssey in an alien world"?

It is, of course, fair to remember that Hawthorne's view of himself was ostensibly more in accord with James's view of him than with ours. "The sketches are not, it is hardly necessary to say, profound; it is rather more remarkable that they so seldom, if ever, show any design on the writer's part to make them so. They have none of the abstruseness of idea, or obscurity of expression, which mark the written communications of a solitary mind with itself. They never need translation. . . . Every sentence, so far as it embodies thought and sensibility, may be understood and felt by anybody who will give himself the trouble to read it, and will take up the book in a proper mood."

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To which the modern student of Hawthorne will say that his author is a foxy fellow indeed, and go on to explain what "read" really means, what is the extent of the necessary "trouble" that the reader will have to give himself, and what constitutes the "proper mood" in which the book is to be taken up. It is no secret how we achieved our modern Hawthorne, our dark poet, charged with chthonic knowledge, whose utterances are as ambiguous as those of any ancient riddling oracle, multi-levelled and hidden and "capable of endless extensions of meaning and of stimulating repeated analyses and interpretations"—it is plain that the Hawthorne of our day came into being at the behest of the famous movement of criticism that began some forty years ago, that movement of criticism which James could know nothing of, although he was to be one of its preeminent subjects.

And if we undertake to say how the critical movement put us in possession of our Hawthorne, we cannot be content to describe the process only in terms of the good effects of "close reading." The techniques of investigation and pedagogy which were employed by the critical movement are of manifest importance, but an understanding of modern criticism in its historical actuality requires that we be aware of an intention which is anterior to every technique. That intention was to give literature a new force and authority. Or perhaps we should say that the intention was to support the new degree of force and authority that literature was claiming for itself. The technical methods of modern criticism are summed up for us in the famous footnote in which Mr. Eliot told us that the spirit killeth but the letter giveth life. But by this statement Mr. Eliot said something more than that the enlightened reader must pay strict attention to the minute details of literary art, or that criticism is not to be thought of as the adventures of a soul among masterpieces. He was making a statement about the nature of literature. We may understand him to have been saying that literature is of a *primitive* nature. For although the allegiance to "the letter" which he urged upon us will at first glance suggest intellectuality, and an intellectuality of a rather haughty sort, and something like a scientistic glorification of precision, qualities which the critical movement in general does indeed often seem to claim for itself, it is actually an expression of belief in the magical force and authority of words and their arrangement, as in a charm or spell, an expression of belief that literature characteristically makes its appeal to

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archaic human faculties which have been overlaid by civilization and deeply hidden.

My reference to its belief in the "primitive" nature of literature will tell us only a little about the very large and very complex intention of modern criticism. But it may serve to remind us that the critical movement, in its diverse groups and parties, set itself up in opposition to what a social psychologist has called the "respect revolution" of our time. The phrase refers to the culture of democratic-capitalist industrialism and to that culture's devaluation of certain traditional ideas, modes of life, personnels, qualities of art, etc. The conception of art as "primitive," as taking its rise in an older mode of life, may be thought of as a way of challenging those aspects of the "respect revolution" which were rationalistic, positivistic, vulgar, and concerned with superficial and transitory rather than with deep and permanent things.

The phrase I have borrowed, awkward and jargonistic as it is, may serve to propose the thought that cultural impulses stand in the closest proximity to social impulses and are often scarcely to be distinguished from them—to speak of the "respect revolution" may remind us that a strong cultural preference has much in common with social antagonism.[1] The translation of modes of thought and of artistic imagination into modes of social antagonism, or the other way around, is natural and inevitable in our day, and of course it was practiced by the members of the critical movement itself. Everyone is aware of how important in his thought about poetry Mr. Eliot's social and political ideas were; in America many practitioners of the New Criticism took positions more or less like Mr. Eliot's, and the instance of Dr. Leavis reminds us that within the movement—which is by no means to be thought of as wholly defined by the work of the New Critics—there were sharp antagonisms of social preference, although at this distance in time the differences between one party and another are perhaps already of less importance than the antagonism

1. An example which, although it is not drawn from the critical movement, is relevant to our subject is V. L. Parrington's representation of Hawthorne as being virtually an enemy of the common people because of the delicacy of his art, his concern with the inner life and the problem of evil, and his coldness to the enthusiasms of Transcendentalism, which Parrington describes as "the revolutionary criticism that was eager to pull down the old temples to make room for nobler."

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which all parties showed to the social values that had been established by the respect revolution.[2]

The social emotions which were involved in the critical movement do not in themselves immediately concern us, but I mention them in order to suggest how charged with will, how deeply implicated in the bitter moralities of choosing among social styles, was the intellectual tendency that gave us the Hawthorne we know.

But if we do indeed owe our Hawthorne to the movement of criticism, it may be that our new possession is a little compromised by the somewhat fatigued reputation of criticism in recent years. In 1956, in his University of Minnesota lecture, Mr. Eliot expressed what he was not alone in feeling—a degree of disenchantment with the enormous critical activity of our age.[3] He was ready to affirm that our criticism was very brilliant, but he felt it necessary to say that "it may even come to seem, in retrospect, too brilliant." By which he meant, I think, too busy, too eager to identify ironies, and to point to ambiguities, and to make repeated analyses and interpretations.

One objection that Mr. Eliot made to the hyperactivity of criticism is that it interferes with our private and personal relation to the literary work, that it prevents our freedom to respond to it in our own way. I should go further than this and say that the brilliant busyness of criticism has not only changed our relation to literature, to art in general, but has even changed our conception of the nature of art, and in a way that, if we stop to think of it, we might not be entirely happy about.

The situation that I would describe is by way of being a paradox. Of this paradox the first term is our belief that the vulgar art-product, the art-product characteristic of the "respect revolution," stands in a relation to the public which is radically different from the relation to the public maintained by the work that commands our best attention

2. In the social-psychological view, Dr. Leavis is presumably no less "aristocratic" than Mr. Eliot. At any rate, I am—I picked up the phrase "respect revolution" from an essay in which it is said that my volume *The Opposing Self* "defends an aristocratic attitude toward the respect revolution in terms of an implicit romantic notion of inner direction." (Arthur J. Brodbeck, "Values in *The Lonely Crowd*: Ascent or Descent of Man?", in *Culture and Character*, edited by Seymour Martin Lipset and Leo Lowenthal, 1962, p. 59)

3. I should here take note of Mr. Eliot's statement that the critical movement ought not to be thought of as deriving from him.

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and admiration. The former, the "popular" or middlebrow work consciously refers itself to the public and is shaped by its response to public prejudices and desires. The latter, the work of genius or disinterested talent, refers itself only to the inner life of its creator and is to be judged only by the truth of its representation of that innerness. Our commitment to this criterion constitutes, as M. H. Abrams tells us, the basis of our modern esthetic. In his admirable *The Mirror and the Lamp,* after describing the "mimetic" theories of art of classical antiquity and the "pragmatic" theories of the Renaissance and the 18th century, Professor Abrams goes on to speak of the "expressive" theories of our own time: "The first test any poem must pass is no longer, 'Is it true to nature?' or 'Is it appropriate to the requirements either of the best judges or the generality of mankind?' but a criterion looking in a different direction; namely, 'Is it sincere? Is it genuine? Does it match the intention, the feeling, and the actual state of mind of the poet while composing?' The work ceases then to be regarded as primarily a reflection of nature . . . the mirror held up to nature becomes transparent and yields the recorded insights into the mind and heart of the poet himself." This is in large part true, yet an accurate account of this first criterion of modern judgment must not lead us to believe that our response stops with our testing the congruity between the created work and its maker's inner life at the time of its creation. We must be aware that, once we have made our way into the artist's inner life in order to decide whether or not the created work is congruent with it, the artist's inner life ceases in some degree to be inner. It is on public view, available to general scrutiny and judgment.

The artist, of course, makes no objection to his innerness being thus publicized. If we consider the situation of the arts in general in Paris between 1885 and 1914, which is the definitive period of the modern epoch, we can say that it was characterized by the passionate devotion of the artists to their inner lives, to their personal and peculiar visions. But in all the history of art was there ever a movement which was so conscious of a public, even though in its deficiencies rather than in its legitimate expectations, and so determined to impose itself upon the public? The artist himself often led the enterprise of making his work prevail, but this was not necessary—when once its sincerity and genuineness were agreed upon by a faithful few, there gathered

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around the work a band of fighting men to carry it on to the field in force, like the Ark of the Covenant, each member of the band deriving strength from the sacred object, becoming ever more confirmed in his own sincerity and genuineness while bringing into ultimate question the authenticity of the heathen public.

Hence our paradox. Never, in a secular culture, has the inner life seemed of such moment as it does in our culture. And never has the inner life been lived so publicly, so much in terms of significant associations and allegiances, of admirations and rejections that make plain how things stand within.

As a result, it becomes ever more difficult for a work of art to be thought of as existing in itself or in our private and personal experience of it—its existence becomes the elaborate respect systems that grow up around it, that huge penumbra of the public effort to understand it and to be in a right relation to it, and to make known to the world the completeness of the understanding and the rightness of the relation that has been achieved. The work exists less in itself than in the purview of one or another of the public agencies we have set up for the service of the inner life; of these one of the most notable is surely literary criticism, which, as it has established itself in the universities, constitutes a great new profession, ever growing in its personnel and in its influence.[4]

The extent of our author's public existence will not seem irrelevant to the Hawthorne Question (since there is such a thing), for Hawthorne's relation to the public of his own day was a matter of great moment in his thought about himself. Hawthorne seems never to have been sure whether to be ashamed or proud of his lack of success with the mass of his countrymen. And of course this was not for him merely a question of his career but of his moral life, feeling as he did

4. For an interesting account of the part played by public agencies—"museums, university art departments, professional publications"—in the establishment of new painting see Harold Rosenberg's column in *The New Yorker,* September 7, 1963, pp. 136-146. Mr. Rosenberg's estimate of the power—one might say the fury—of criticism is worth noting: "The future does not come about of itself; it is the result of choices and actions in the present. Criticism, including art criticism, is a form of conflict about what shall be. If history can make into art what is now not art, it can also unmake what is now art. It is conceivable that Michelangelo, Vermeer, Goya, Cezanne will someday cease to be art; it is only necessary that, as in the past, an extreme ideology shall seize power and cast out existing masterpieces as creatures of darkness."

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that to be removed from one's fellow-beings was to commit a mortal sin. His ambivalence is expressed in the Preface to *Twice-Told Tales*. He tells us—it is touching to hear him say it—that the stories are written in "the style of a man of society," that they are "his attempt to open an intercourse with the world." Yet Hawthorne's impulse to privacy is definitive of his genius. We think so and he thought so. The delicate, the fragile, the evanescent, all that could not survive the public touch or gaze, made his conception of success in art. Of his tales he says that "they have the blue tint of flowers that blossomed in too retired a shade—the coolness of meditative habit which diffuses itself through the feeling and observation of every sketch." The flower was for him the perfect symbol of the created work: he was at pains to revise his ancient family name so that it would be more precisely that of a beautiful flower-bearing tree, its blossoms delicate and brief, its integrity and isolation enforced by its thorns or spines.

It is all too possible that in having made Hawthorne public, in having busied ourselves to discover that he is a Question, which then we must bestir ourselves to answer, we have lost much of the charm and fragrance which may well be his essence. James was much engaged by the beauty of Hawthorne's work, by its textures and hue, of which he speaks not so much with critical admiration as with personal delight. Of this surface esthetic the modern critics of Professor Donohue's volume say little. Their concern is with an esthetic of depth, an esthetic of the arrangement of quasi-doctrinal significances. One cannot have everything, but whoever has first read Hawthorne in childhood—James makes a point of his having done so—will be inclined to feel that something he once knew is missing, something that spoke to him, and very movingly, before ever ambiguity was a word, some wind or music of unparticular significance that had its abode in the forests and haunted The Notch and played around The Great Stone Face.

It is a loss, but no doubt we must teach ourselves to sustain it cheerfully. For how else are we to deal with Hawthorne than in the public way we do deal with him? He belongs in the canon of our spiritual heritage, and how else is one to impart that heritage, how else is one to be a serious critic or a university teacher, if he is not as *active* as he may be in response to his subject? And if one perhaps goes on to think of his profession as having a more than pedagogic

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function, as being charged to make some contribution to the effort of spiritual discovery of our time, one may not surrender one's right to press each work as hard as one can in order to make it yield the full of its possible meaning.

Henry James's Hawthorne will not suit the purposes of the teacher or critic, neither his strictly professional nor his larger cultural and spiritual purposes. What can we do with a Hawthorne who, in dealing with the heavy moral burden which was his ancestral heritage, not only refused to accept it as his own but contrived to make it "evaporate in the light and charming fumes of artistic production," a sort of ethical prestidigitator?

I confess to being of the opinion that in establishing our Hawthorne as against Henry James's Hawthorne we have lost something of considerable value. But I am constrained to heed the contention that we have gained more than we have lost. I must even be aware that we have acquired an augmented canon. For us today none of Hawthorne's stories surpasses in interest "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." James does not mention this great story. And indeed it is only in relatively recent years that it presents itself as demanding inclusion in any selection of Hawthorne's work that might be made —when Austen Warren in 1938 and Newton Arvin in 1946 prepared selected editions of the tales, neither of the two editors, whose literary intelligence is of a very high order, included the story we have come especially to prize. Its Dionysian darkness, its brilliant, bitter, ambivalent humor, were presumably not yet available to them, not yet available to us.

Let us, then, stay confirmed in our belief that the Hawthorne we now have is the right one. But it may be worth asking why it is that James's Hawthorne is so different from ours. I said earlier that James's view was not merely personal, that it was controlled by a cultural assumption. Remembering the year of the monograph, 1879, at the apogee of Victorianism, we are tempted to say that this assumption is part of the ideology of Philistinism which always hovered over even the best thought of the Victorian era. What we mean by Philistinism surely accommodates James's almost angry insistence that our author is not possibly to be thought of as dark or bitter or pessimistic, is not to be called "tragical," virtually not serious, that he is childlike in the indulgence of his fancy, that his only concern is to amuse himself and

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entertain us; and this is not to mention James's expressed dislike of "symbols and correspondences," of "seeing a story told as if it were another and very different story." James, of course, figures in our minds exactly as an avowed enemy of Philistinism, yet an ideology works in mysterious ways, no one can be sure of being immune from all its effects, and it may be that we have to admit that James was in accord with some of the questionable aspects of his epoch.

This unhappy possibility might be sustained by the recollection of a certain passage from *The Ambassadors,* the famous speech that Lambert Strether makes to Little Bilham. "Live all you can," Strether says to his young friend, "it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that, what have you had? . . ." When, in our 'forties, James was in the full tide of the great revival of interest in him, this speech was frequently quoted. Twenty years ago the little homily seemed to touch the American consciousness in a very intimate way. *Live all you can; it's a mistake not to.* How much that seemed to say about America—our nation gave us much, but it was ever reluctant to grant us the right to have our lives. No one thought that the implied doctrine was the whole of James, yet it seemed very much at the center of his work, and its intensely asserted positivism validated him for many readers who might otherwise have been put off him, just as now, in a different cultural moment, it accounts, as I think, for much of that diminution of interest in James which is to be observed.

What did James mean by having one's life? He meant something really quite simple and actual and tangible. He meant Paris—surely he meant that first. He meant all that was possible to do and enjoy in Paris and not in Woollett, Massachusetts—he meant having intense erotic relationships; and breaking the code of respectability without pain of conscience; and Gloriani's garden; and sunny days on the river; and Mme. de Vionnet's beauty and charm, and her manners and place in society. "To live" meant to know and to have the pleasures of the world.

James gave perfect credence to the pleasures of the world. He believed them to be real even at those moments when he was most intensely aware that they might be involved with vulgarity and even cruelty. He gave an equal credence to the sanctions which control

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and limit the ways in which the pleasures of the world may be seized, and to the moral sensibilities which propose the circumstances in which the pleasures of the world—perhaps the world itself—must be surrendered. The credence he gave to pleasure and the credence he gave to moral sanction together define James's certitude that the world is *there*: the unquestionable, inescapable world; the world so beautifully and so disastrously solid, physical, material, "natural."

And I think that it is because the world is so very much there for James that our interest in his work has receded from the high point it reached two decades ago. It does not move us now as it once did to hear him say, "Live as much as you can; it's a mistake not to." Whatever Paris and Gloriani's garden and a free and happy sexuality may mean to our practical consciousness (perhaps everything!), to our literary or spiritual consciousness they now mean but little. If we can imagine a novelist of our own moment who matched James in genius, we cannot easily suppose that he would give anything like James's credence to the good "thereness" of the world, to the necessity of having one's life in the terms of the hedonism that James seems to celebrate. By the same token, we cannot easily suppose that he would give anything like James's credence to the moral sanctions which control and limit the ways in which the pleasures of the world may be grasped. These two credences, as I say, are the ground of James's art, constituting as they do his acceptance of the world's reality. They make the element of his work that tends to alienate it from the contemporary consciousness, that allows us to wonder whether we must not judge James to have been touched with the Philistinism of his epoch and therefore misled in his judgment of Hawthorne.

Our contemporary feeling about the world, alien from that of James, is much in accord with that of Franz Kafka. Everything about Kafka is still in dispute, perhaps even more than it formerly was, now that our response to him has become more precise and discriminating. But almost everyone will agree that Kafka's work gives very little recognition, if any at all, to the world in its ordinary actuality, as it is the object of our desires and wills, as we know it socially, politically, erotically, domestically; or, if it recognizes the world at all, it does so only through what it perceives of the radical incompatibility of world and mankind. The lively little study of Kafka by Günther Anders seems to me especially satisfying because it responds so fully

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to Kafka as a *force,* speaking of him as a "dangerous" writer and questioning whether it is "wise" to admire him. Anders tells us that Kafka "provided exactly the mixture of sensation a certain class and generation of readers . . . most desired, pandering to their self-conscious sense of having reached the last phase of individualist sensibility. For here indeed were stories about the individual in his purest, most isolated role—yet told in a tone which showed how pointless was his position in the world. The hero was still the center, but the center of complete indifference." In another passage, Anders speaks of Kafka's tone as transforming "men and things into a kind of *nature morte.*" The "class and generation of readers" which was given what it wanted by Kafka is said by Anders to be that which flourished in 1925. If this dating is accurate for Europe, it is not accurate for America, where Kafka, like James, made his strongest impression upon our literary culture in the 'forties and continues to stand well to the fore of our interest while James recedes into the background.

The name of Kafka had to turn up sooner or later in any discussion of Hawthorne, for our awareness of Kafka has done much to license our way of reading our author. Everyone perceives certain likenesses between Hawthorne and Kafka. They were similarly, although not equally, remote from the public, and to the public view they presented temperaments of which a defining element was a quality of personal gentleness at variance with the subversive nature of their work. There is a very considerable degree of similarity in their preoccupations—"man's dark odyssey in an alien world" may serve to describe Kafka's as well as Hawthorne's. They stood in equivalent relations to religion: unbelievers both, their imaginations were captivated by the faiths to which they were connected by family tradition and from these unavowed faiths they derived the license for the mythic genre which constitutes so much of their appeal, for the representation of agencies of human destiny which are not of the actual world. Then too, having in mind Kafka's negation of the world of actuality, I think it can fairly be said that there is something comparable in the way that Hawthorne deals with the world. He encourages the comparison when he tells us that he does not write novels but "romances," by which he means that his fiction does not make a very determined reference to the concrete substantialities of life, the observation and

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imitation of which is the definitive business of novels. We may surmise that his "simple" and "thinly-composed" society, as James called it, was congenial to his creative disposition, for it facilitated the enterprise that is characteristic of him, the representation of the world as being susceptible to penetration and suffusion by agencies not material and mundane. And it was exactly Hawthorne's happy acceptance of a thinly composed society that James jibbed at. He himself craved thickness; that famous list he drew up of the solid interesting actualities that were not at the disposal of Hawthorne's art, or the art of any American—"no Epsom, no Ascot!"—tells us, of course, what he was claiming for his own use when he transplanted himself to England, finding there, in its unassailable Britannic citadel, the *Philistine solidity of world that he needed. And needed, one is* inclined to say, not only as an artist but as a person—one has the sense that Hawthorne's art, because it represents a world which is only thinly composed, made James nervous.

What most troubled James in Hawthorne's work is not likely to trouble the reader who exercises the characteristic highly developed literary sensibility of our time. Indeed, as I have suggested, that modern reader is likely to find a measure of security in the very circumstance that made James anxious: in the degree that the world can be thought of as thinly composed, the autonomy of spirit is the more easily imagined.

But it is just here that we are likely to go astray in our perception of Hawthorne. For if it is indeed true that Hawthorne's world is thinly composed, whatever its composition lacks in thickness is supplied by an iron hardness. There are indeed similarities to be observed between Kafka and Hawthorne, but there is—after all, and despite first appearance—this decisive difference between them, that for Hawthorne the world is always and ineluctably *there* and in a very stubborn and uncompromising way. A passage in *The Marble Faun* tells us how perdurably Hawthorne understood it to be there. Kenyon, Hilda, and Miriam have been talking at length and fancifully about Count Donatello's resemblance to the antique statue of the dancing faun. "The foregoing conversation," we are told in that shameless explicit fashion that was once possible, "had been carried on in a mood in which all imaginative people, whether artists or poets, love to indulge. In this frame of mind, they sometimes find their pro-

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foundest truths side by side with the idlest jest, and utter one or the other apparently without distinguishing which is the most valuable, or assigning any considerable value to either. The resemblance between the marble faun and their living companion had made a deep half-serious, half-mirthful impression on these three friends, and had taken them into a certain airy region, lifting up, as it is so pleasant to feel them lifted, their heavy earthly feet from the actual soil of life. The world had been set afloat, as it were, for a moment, and relieved them, for just so long, of all the customary responsibility for what they thought and said." It is merely the conversation of "creative" persons that Hawthorne says he is describing, but we surmise that he would wish us to have in mind as well the works of art which they create, that he means to define the relation in which the artist stands to the world. If that is so, we will not fail to observe that what Hawthorne emphasizes in his account of this relation is not the power of the artistic imagination but the intractability of the world. For a brief moment the artist takes flight from it, and sometimes he can even seem to set the very world afloat; but only for so long as his words are being uttered; when again he falls silent, the world is no longer a balloon and his feet walk again on earth, on "the actual soil of life."

Of possible conceptions of the artist's relation to the world, this is indeed a very modest one. And if at any time in our judgment of Hawthorne we become aware, as indeed we must, of moments when his power as an artist seems insufficient to the occasion, we might reasonably attribute what weakness we discern in his art to a conception of the artist's manner of dealing with the world which is less bold and intransigent than it might be.

When it comes to power—to, as we say, sheer power—Hawthorne is manifestly inferior to Kafka. Of Kafka's power an impressive index is the fact that his version of man's dark odyssey proceeds without touching upon cases of conscience. In such relations between man and man as are represented in Kafka's work, it is never a possibility that one man can help or injure another. The idea "I did him wrong" is foreign to his mind. The idea "I did wrong" is of course omnipresent, but this means only "I did not do the required thing, that which the Law demands; and therefore I shall be punished." What an intransigence of imagination is needed to conceive man's spiritual life as having no discernible connection with morality! And not only

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its power is to be attributed to the intransigence of his imagination but also the extraordinary esthetic success which Kafka consistently achieves. Esthetically, it seems, it is impossible for him to fail. There is never a fault of conception or execution, never an error of taste, or logic, or emphasis. As why should there be? An imagination so boldly autonomous, once it has brought itself into being, conceives of nothing that can throw it off its stride. Like the dream, it confronts subjective fact only, and there are no esthetically unsuccessful dreams, no failed nightmares.

The dream, it need scarcely be said, plays its part in the imagination of Hawthorne too, and most markedly in those of his works which touch us most deeply. But it is obvious that the "spontaneous, peremptory, and obligatory nature of dreaming"[5] manifests itself far less in Hawthorne than in Kafka. Over Hawthorne's imagination the literal actuality of the world always maintains its dominion. This must be kept to the forefront of our understanding of Hawthorne, even though we go on to say that he made it his characteristic enterprise to represent the moral life as existing beyond the mere pragmatic, to show it to us as a mystery, as being hidden, dark, and dangerous, and as having some part of its existence in a world which is not that of our ordinary knowledge. This other world, in which the presence of divinity is to be dimly apprehended, interpenetrates the world of material circumstance, and, in doing so, provides the quotidian and actual world with its most intense significances.

When Hawthorne is successful in suggesting the interpenetration of the two worlds, he affects us profoundly. But we cannot fail to be aware of how readily his belief in the other unseen world can be checked by his sense of this world's actuality and intractability, how often it falls short of being spontaneous, peremptory, and obligatory. James's violent dislike of allegory and emblematic devices make him unduly harsh in condemnation of the flaming celestial A in *The Scarlet Letter*; he judges the scene to be "not moral tragedy, but physical comedy." This is extreme, but we all agree to the principle of his objection and recall how much too often Hawthorne gave occasion for its being made. "Roger Malvin's Burial" may serve as our

5. I take the phrase from the remarkable "Studies on the Psychopathology of Sleep and Dreams" by Charles Fisher, M.D., and William C. Dement, M.D., in *The American Journal of Psychiatry,* Vol. 119, No. 12, June 1963, p. 1163

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example of the characteristic weakness. The informing idea of this story is superb, and its execution is adequate to its conception up to the moment when we are asked to consider "whose guilt had blasted" the topmost bough of the oak, that withered bough which is to fall at the moment when Reuben Bourne has expiated his sin. Perhaps no other work of literature proposes so forcibly the idea that morality is not bounded by the pragmatic, that it creates a habitation for itself which is not only of this world, that it moves, by some process of transcendence, from practicality into absoluteness, or at least to unreasoning piety. The morality that Hawthorne has been conceiving has, as it were, the power of the dream, for it is indeed spontaneous, peremptory, and obligatory; but the incident of the falling bough, which is intended to enforce upon us the belief that the moral law has just these qualities as its defining attributes, is itself merely gratuitous; it seems scarcely the work of the imagination at all, rather of the author's will; so far from strengthening the credence we give to the preternatural world, it leads us to think that the author's own belief is seeking support.

Eventually Hawthorne lost all power of belief in the other world, and with it all power of creation. The last years of his life are terrible to contemplate. His labor seems to have been as devoted as it ever was, but he confronted white paper with the knowledge that nothing he now might put on it could have value. We have Kafka at hand to suggest the dreadfulness of the doom: it was as if Hawthorne's gift had been confiscated in punishment for some indiscernible sin, perhaps one that to all appearances was a virtue. "By 1860 he had worked himself dry," Edward H. Davidson tells us in the introduction to his edition of *Dr. Grimshawe's Secret,* one of the several gray chaotic efforts of the last period. "The 'present, the actual,' he confessed, was too pressing, and in *Grimshawe* he tried to write a sermon for his time without any of the moral insights which had been his special distinction in the years before he had gone to England."

Yet if we set aside the misery of the decline—that fate which must sometimes seem all too peculiarly American!—and set aside too the instances of esthetic failure in the great period, we have to say that Hawthorne, even when he was not intimidated by the "present, the actual," must be judged to lack the power of imagination which we expect him to have when we respond to the degree of power he

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actually does have. Despite the best efforts of the critics, the contemporary reader must always, I think, be somewhat disappointed by Hawthorne. With so much readiness to apprehend the dark, the unregenerate, and evil itself, why must he be so quick to modulate what he sees? He is capable of conceiving the terrible black veil that Mr. Hooper wears over his face, and of pointing to the guilt that we each incur and hide and long to reveal—why, having triumphed in the creation of the dread emblem, must he raise the question of whether the veil is not an egotism, an object of irony? His most famous single utterance loses its great potential force in its rhetoric of qualification: " 'Be true! Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred!' " Why not, we ask, actually your worst? If it is correct to say with Professor Davidson that the "special distinction" of Hawthorne lies in his "moral insights," we are in effect saying that he was concerned to look into something that is there to be looked into, and for our time an investigation of objective reality cannot have the same imaginative freedom and force as an affirmation or a negation, which has only a subjective obligation. Hawthorne's vision of the moral life, although it does indeed reach in one direction to the transcendental or spiritual, reaches also in the other direction to the psychological, leading the reader to ask, "Is this true to the fact as I know it?" To the readers of Hawthorne's own time, the psychological observation of the novelist, especially when it discovered the dark and subversive elements of the mind, served as a liberation; but we are becoming inured to psychology—to the typical "highly developed" reader of our time, it does not bring the old liberation of surprise, and one may even detect in our literary opinion the belief that, insofar as it is a knowledge derived from observation and susceptible of being systematized, made into a science, it constricts rather than enlarges our imagination of man.[6] A critic whose interpretation of our author must always be listened to with especial respect has remarked of Hawthorne that he was concerned with sin only in its pragmatic aspect—"not sin," F. O. Matthiessen said, "but its consequences for

6. On the contemporary status of psychology, as well as on the contemporary status of "the world," see in Hans Jonas's *The Gnostic Religion* (revised edition, The Beacon Press, 1963) the Epilogue, "Gnosticism, Nihilism and Existentialism."

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human lives is Hawthorne's major theme." I would demur a little from this judgment, for I think that sin itself held a strong fascination for Hawthorne. But there can be no doubt that his awareness of the consequences of sin was never far distant from his concern with sin itself. In short, he always consented to the power of his imagination being controlled by the power of the world.

So far as James was able to perceive the submission to this control, he admired Hawthorne and made him one of the masters of his own art. His discomfort began and his rather irritable condescension came into play when he saw the control somewhat lessen and the signs of an assertion of autonomy appear, when Hawthorne moved toward imaginative intransigence. We reverse James's judgment. The modern consciousness requires that an artist have an imagination which is more intransigent than James could allow, more spontaneous, peremptory, and obligatory, which shall impose itself upon us with such unquestionable authority that "the actual" can have no power over us but shall seem the creation of some inferior imagination, that of mere convention and habit. Our modern piety—I use the word in its good sense—is of the autonomous self, or at least of the self as it approaches autonomy in its tortured dream of metaphysical freedom. Hawthorne could indeed conceive of our longed-for autonomy, and to some considerable extent exemplify it in his art; and in the degree that he does so, he is our possession and invites us to try to possess him ever more intimately. Yet we cannot but be aware that he resists us who are of the modern dispensation, that his own piety is not committed where ours is.

There is an episode in Daniel Cory's recent book about Santayana which suggests the nature of Hawthorne's piety as I comprehend it. Mr. Cory tells us how, as a young man, he could not understand why Santayana should have described *The Realm of Matter,* the first of the four volumes of *The Realms of Being,* as " 'essentially the work of a moralist,' " and, with a touch of impatience, Santayana said to him, " 'Don't you understand by now that the real object of piety is matter—or Nature, if you prefer. It is the idea of Might—the ineluctable Yahveh of the Hebrews, when this primitive notion has been freed of its local and superstitious accretions.' " And Mr. Cory goes on to say that "all his life Santayana had been convinced that the religious attitude of *respect for God* is at bottom the same thing as our

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sense of dependence on an efficacious but largely unfathomed 'background' of human experience. . . . When our naive ideas of God or Nature have been stripped of their pictorial and emotional accretions, what we are left with is the defiant core of both these ideas: the ineradicable conviction of primordial Might that impinges upon and ought to control the ambition of the distressed mind."

Whose is the shout we hear, the angry cry of protest at these words? Whose else could it be but the outraged spirit of William Blake, in whose existence we all now participate? The great offended voice is raised to assert the power of the artist's imagination to deny the reality of the primordial Might, or to challenge and overcome it, or to interpose between it and us a dream, which, perhaps in the degree that it terrifies, commands our assent and holds out the promise of freedom.

If that is indeed what ideally we expect the imagination of the artist to do, Hawthorne does not satisfy our expectation. Again and again, in what we judge to be his too limited faith in the imagination, he admits, even insists, that the world is there, that we are dependent upon it. His quick response to the non-rational, his lively awareness of the primitive and chthonic, of the dark roots of life, does not deflect the naturalistic and humanistic tendency of his mind. At his very most powerful he does not interpose his imagination between us and the world; however successfully he may project illusion, he must point beyond it to the irrefrangible solidity.

He feared "the ambition of the distressed mind" and before the primordial Might he maintained an attitude of almost studied modesty, we might say of childlikeness when we remember what irony and malice he was capable of attributing to a child. Like a child, he takes liberties and plays tricks; he amuses himself and entertains us; he takes somber moral principles and makes them into toys—we have but to give to the idea of play the consideration it deserves to see that Henry James's description of his activity is not so deficient in justice as at first it seems. Of his playfulness the ambivalence and ambiguity which are so often noted of him are essential aspects. But his ambivalence and ambiguity do not, I think, bring him close to Kafka's mute, riddling power—through them, rather, he approaches to Montaigne's "Que sais-je?", the ironic childlike question, the question which conscious or calculated modesty asks, out of which all the questions come.

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It is questions that Hawthorne leaves us with. It is, really, not at all clear why Young Goodman Brown must live out his life in sullenness because he refuses to sign the Devil's pact; nor is it clear why Robin must join the violent mob in laughter at his kinsman before he is his own master, and indeed it is not clear why being his own master is a wholly admirable condition. And when we consult ourselves for answers, we become aware of our dependence upon that part of the "efficacious but largely unfathomed background of human experience" which lies very close at hand, within our very selves, and which reminds us of our dependence upon its further reaches.

And in the degree that he does not dominate us, Hawthorne cannot wholly gratify us, moderns that we are. Exquisite artist though he be, he yet suggests to us the limitations of art, and thus points to the stubborn core of actuality that is not to be overcome, and seems to say that the transaction between it and us is after all an unmediated one. And by his ambiguities and ambivalences he seems to imply that we—each one of us alone—must make our investigations and our terms as best we may. He has no great tyrant-dream in which we can take refuge, he leaves us face to face with the ultimately unmodifiable world, of which our undifferentiated human nature is a part. He does not even permit us what seems a complete view of the desperateness of our situation—nothing complete, nothing ultimate.

No, it is not gratifying. Yet if we tell the truth about our experience of Hawthorne, some of us will say that as we read him—or at moments as we read him—we have a sensation of having been set at liberty. It is not an entirely comfortable condition. We find ourselves at a loss and uncertain when we are in the charge of an artist so little concerned to impose upon us the structure of his imagination. We look for a more coercive will, and are insecure in its lack. Yet perhaps we feel, too, an impulse of exhilaration charged through our art-saturated minds, a new pleasure in being led carelessly or playfully to one or another dangerous place and being left alone to look at the danger in our own way. The pleasure cannot last long—probably more is needed in the life around us before such independent confrontations of our dependence will seem natural to us, and a kind of joy. Our judgment of Hawthorne may have to be that he is not for us today, and perhaps not even tomorrow. He is, in Nietzsche's phrase, one of the spirits of yesterday—and the day after tomorrow.

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Richard G. Stern

WANDERERS

"Those Jews sure did travel." Miss Swindleman reflecting, as the bellhops carried away her glowing Collection, the four hundred and fifty postcards which memorialized the wanderings of Hotel Winthrop guests for a quarter of a century. A wild shuffle through the world Miss Swindleman herself knew not otherwise. Unless one counted the scenic provision of a quadri-annual locomotive ride between New York City, her place of permanent exile, and Synod, Missouri, her detested point of origin. Some provision: the green pudding of southern Ohio, the hoarse red gullet of southern Indiana, and that scab of ambitious hummocks called the Ozarks. One week there with the surviving Swindlemans, and she was ready for another four years of New York.

Though less and less ready, thanks to the Jews. When she'd first come, the Winthrop and the Depression were as new as she; they broke into the New York world together. The clientele was quiet: widows, widowers, bachelors, spinsters, a few small families, the ex-rich, learning to adjust their wants to their constricted means, as she learned to adjust hers to the constrictions of New York loneliness. A quiet, respectable, learning time.

Then, as the Depression slid away and the quiet goyim died, the Jews began moving in. They too were bachelors, spinsters, widows, widowers, and small families, but they had not been broken by hard times. Decades of finagling, deception, complaints and theft had hardened and renewed them. From behind the bronze staves of her cashier's den, she regarded their great noses twitch with the strain of hoping she would overlook the delinquent quarters in their

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monthly settlements. She never did, but the strain of guardianship showed in her face.

The Winthrop too showed strain: the rutting plaster showed it, the bursting waterpipes, the splintering toilet seats, the ripping carpets. And the management! No more the quiet little Jew, Oppenheim, who'd moseyed noiselessly in the corridors her first twelve years, and then, fifty if he was a day, and weak as the cocktails the surviving goyim drank in the Peacock Room at five o'clock—shoring their ghetto within the ghetto—he was drafted away in 'forty-five to be replaced by a perfect 4F, the hunchback and supreme yeller, Nagel, a 'black Jew,' oily, welching, eavesdropping, and mean-eyed as the shua bird Doctor Mockus had mailed her ten years ago from the Faeroe Islands. Board Six.

With the onset of the Jews, though, Miss Swindleman had conceived her life's mission: their assimilation. Assimilation to the ways and manners of the older stock which she represented and which gave names to the invaded hotels of Eighty-Sixth Street, the Pieter Stuyvesant, the Governor Brewster, the Dorchester Arms, the Winthrop. Every check she eyed, every sum she re-added contributed to their education, to the enforcement of the rules of western life, rules to which no amount of traveling could educate them.

They were great travelers, great postcard-senders. She'd started her collection one day after Roosevelt beat Landon, when three postcards from three different continents showed up in her mail. Board One had gone up, and the Jews traveled to fill it. Over the years, war or no war, the boards filled with twisted, six-word cards from Sfax and Borneo, Tarsus, Rhodes, Rio, and Auckland. The fjords ran a blue storm down Board Three; the statuary of Board Five made up a great museum; and there were enough exotic, mean-eyed animals—they loved killers—to stock a Bronx Zoo. If she'd used "repeats," the Taj Mahals alone could have replaced the slums of New York; but the eye which spotted the delinquent fifteen cents in Milton L. Bungalow's monthly was ruthless about filtering repetition from the world's views and could spot a familiar bend of the Trondheim fjord as quickly as a native. There were few places on the traveled earth to which Miss Swindleman lacked some sort of key. Even the Arab countries were well-represented. Not only had the Jews traveled there before the war, but the Winthrop's few voyaging goyim liked to

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visit there if only to be able to flaunt the experience before the excluded yehudim.

Miss Swindleman understood the desire to flaunt experience before these wanderers. Experience was a fact, like family, like money, which had to be respected. Not that it marked superiority. Miss Swindleman didn't believe in superiority. There were only greater or lesser collections of fact. She was concerned with the arrangement of the few facts under her control because that was the human task, to fend off the disorderly, the ugly, the crooked. It was why she never turned her back on a Jew when she was in her den. "Get thee before me, Israel." She surveyed their avaricious assaults on order through the peeling bronze staves which never vouchsafed them more than partial views of her.

It was why she classified her own partial views, those nickel two-by-fours, classified them by area, type, color—the blue fjords, the checkerboards of Scotland, highland, lowland. They were not an altar, but a demonstration that the world could be put into shape, and too, that there were things beyond unsteady checks, paid-up phone bills, change for a clanked quarter thrown like an insult under staves. Stability and place were there amidst the wild shuffling, amidst the packed suitcases, the scarred trunks, the taxis to Pier 40.

Miss Swindleman could spot traveler-types as they signed the Register. They signed both easily and wearily. Half the few couples who stayed in the Winthrop traveled; about a third of the widows, three-eighths of the widowers. Under forty didn't count. She'd probably not received more than ten cards from guests under forty, usually children who had lived with widowed parents (not more than twenty regulars in her more than thirty years). She once got a Blenheim Palace from a pock-marked Mettenleiter, and had discarded a repeat of Sugarloaf Mountain from a Baer twin, but that was all that was memorable.

Nothing of course from the two boys of Harvey Mendel, though they were in the Winthrop for fifteen years after she came. She was the only person in the hotel—probably including Mendel—who remembered their mother. Ina Mendel, a name like a sigh, a nice Jewish woman who talked to her in a flutey little voice. No traveler, but nonetheless had once bought her a postcard of the Roman Forum before being told that only mailed postcards were pasted up. Ina took

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plenty from Mendel and the two nut sons: Sonny, who at fourteen was nearly arrested for lowering an armchair out of the eleventh story to an accomplice on the ground in full view of Eighty-sixth Street. He'd been hauled into Nagel by Lester, the cabbie, who looked up from examining one of the pigeons he liked to grab by the throat and threaten with his pen knife. Just last year, Sonny, now known as Harvey, had proved his early promise by being jailed for three months in Phoenix, Arizona, on a charge of taking pornographic pictures. The second nut was Burton, the railroad buff, who spent hours in the lobby memorizing the time-tables but couldn't figure out change for a quarter. Ina lasted six years, then went on the operating table to be knifed to death by some Lester of a surgeon. With her passing, and Oppenheim's, the reign of half-decent Jews ended, and the Mendel-type took over.

They were too mean-spirited even to travel, too cheap to live. Once she'd called him the monk of Eighty-sixth Street. "Are you related to Gregor Mendel, the monk?" she asked him.

He never smiled. Baby lips in a cranium the size of a great soupbowl. Between it and abnormality—water on the brain—was scarcely a hair's breadth of dispute. "What monk?"

"Invented genes," said Miss Swindleman.

"A monk in skirts invents jeans. Crazy," said Mendel.

He was a designer of men's suits, and knew nothing else. An odd man; an odd looker. Under the perisphere of a head, was a fat little body, maybe five feet five, and then two midget's feet. He wasn't a black-looking Jew. In fact, with eyes so blue they were sometimes hard to see and a nose like a soap bubble, he looked as Irish as the policemen who patrolled the streets and held their annual brawl in the Peacock Room. Mendel had once been involved in their brawl and fitted right in. Involved because he was, as usual, staring at people from the lobby armchair where he spent half his life. Staring with those snow-blue eyes, this time at one of the Irish cops who'd staggered out of the brawl, highball in hand, and, seeing Mendel, in overcoat and fedora, staring up at him, had removed the fedora and poured the highball on the great white head. Mendel had risen, sixty-six years old, five feet five inches tall, wrenched the standing lamp out of its socket, raised it over his streaming head, and started after the cop. The cop ran, Mendel followed, the old ladies screeched,

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Gelb, the cigar man, ducked under his counter, and she, safe in her den, watched and waited for Irish brains to go flying down to Seventy-First Street. Only half a squad of uniformed micks leaping out of the Peacock Room preserved the cop. And then they made Mendel a hero, took him into the Peacock Room, shot him full of whiskey, and then elevated him upstairs in triumph.

There weren't many triumphs riding armchairs in the Winthrop lobby, not many triumphs anywhere for Mendel. And the only other thing she could think of in this line was his escaping indictment after pushing Lepidus out of the window; you might as well count not falling off the Empire State Building or catching pneumonia triumphs.

What did she object to in Mendel?

It wasn't idleness. He worked, went downtown three or four times a week till Lepidus's death. He'd once been a success according to Ina, had managed a whole men's department in Buffalo till he'd punched a customer who'd tried to "return" a suit from another store. Not idleness.

Nor was he particularly crooked, only particularly cheap. The number one Jew for cheapness. The Winthrop never collected a penny more from him than his rent. To telephone, he came down to the lobby, day or night, using the pay phone and saving a nickel. He never went into the Peacock Room except to use the toilets, and then only when Sam, the attendant, was running the back elevator. He never bought a cup of coffee in The Nook, and he avoided Gelb's cigar stand so conspicuously that despite twenty-five years of sharing the same lobby, the two never exchanged good mornings. When sick, he sent for borscht with a hard-boiled egg from Sheffrin's, the delicatessen on Columbus Avenue where he ate every day of his life but Yom Kippur and Rosh-Hashonah, when he took his trade to Chock-Full-of-Nuts. This according to the young thief Sonny, who also told Lester—who'd become his confidant after the armchair heist—that except for these two restaurants, the Yorktown Movie Theater—forty cents before one o'clock—and the annual Thanksgiving Dinner downtown with Ina's brother, his father hadn't been inside another place of entertainment since—big leer—his mother had died.

Miss Swindleman was aware of the Thanksgiving Outing. Next to Macy's Parade, it was the surest sign of the holiday. Mendel and the two nut sons washed their faces, put on clean ties, and paraded out of

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the hotel as if they were on the Number One Float. Two hours later they'd be back, soiled with blots of stuffing and cranberry sauce, their faces bloated with self-satisfaction at having a family dinner at a Downtown hotel.

"Mr. Mendel," she said to him after one of the expeditions. "You should try our Thanksgiving dinner here some day. Forty-six birds they cooked this year." (Jewish syntax had crept up on her twenty years ago, and she relaxed into it. She wasn't interested in self-preservation.)

Mendel had sent one of his blue-blank stares through her staves. "Family obligations, Miss Schwindleman. Nothing to do about it," and he floated upstairs, followed by the nuts.

Miss Swindleman objected to more than Mendel's cheapness and third-rate vanity. She objected to his fixity. There he'd sit in the lobby, three sofas, six armchairs, stand-up lamps, Gelb's cigar counter, bent Jews going up and down in the two elevators night and day, the blue and gold elevator men, her bright postcards, a little tropical island in the Eighty-sixth Street cold, plunked down there for no reason but to allow amphibious transients to crawl across it before they dived back down into the ocean. Shelter? Home? Reservoir? A sour little hotel whose only real distinction was her flash of the world and her disciplined hand on the financial wheel. In the midst of this discipline sat that unsmiling, waiting, staring Mendel, isolated like a monk in a burlesque show. It wasn't until the day Lepidus went out the window that she understood all this about him.

Lepidus was one of Mendel's three visitors. The other two were his brother Philip, reportedly a bookie, and Mrs. Minnie Schlag, a hirsute, muscular woman who for years was thought to be the unlikely means of satisfying whatever passion resided in him. It turned out, however, that Mrs. Schlag and Mendel did nothing more passionate together than play pinochle. A bellhop looked in through a hole in the plaster and saw them humped over the coffee table, Mendel in suspenders and Mrs. Schlag in a blouse which showed an arm like the ones on the statues in the Oslo gardens. (Board Five.) Every other Saturday Mrs. Schlag turned up for pinochle at the Winthrop, and once a month on Thursdays, as Sonny told Lester, Mendel went to the Schlags for poker with Dr. Schlag, the bone man, Simon Gabrilowitsch, a bassoonist and reputed cousin of the great pianist,

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Ossip, Mrs. Schlag, and two other refugees from Vienna, one of whom sold perfume atomizers door-to-door. Lester further reported what she was certain was a lie until Schlag's obituary confirmed it, namely that as a young bone man in Vienna he had rented rooms and lent money to an unpromising young man named—"you guessed it," Miss Swindleman would say wickedly to whatever black Jew she related it to—Adolph Hitler. "Ha, ha, ha. Old Schlag could have saved you an ocean voyage, eh Mr. Rappaport? A little arsenic in the chicken soup, doctors aren't suspected, and Schlag would have had a place in history."

"Wouldn't have been no history then," the paling Rappaport or Goldhammer or Mockus would say.

Though not Mendel. His response when she offered him the insight about his comrade was a simple, "I wouldn't have much of a poker game then, Miss Schwindleman." A hard man, a bit of Hitler in his own right. She could see him in the seat of power, bombs instead of stand-up lamps in his angry little arms.

The most frequent visitor was Charlie Lepidus, Mendel's partner. As small as Mendel, but wiry, blue in the face, a scowler, a rapid man, cigar-crunching. A stormer, of elevators, candy counters, her den. Like the last day. "Gimme change fifty," he'd said.

"You a guest of the hotel?" As icy as the roughneck deserved.

"Change of fifty. I'm a guest, a guest." Meaning, "A visitor to a hotel resident."

"Who, may I ask?"

"Mendel. Harvey. 11C. You've seen me a hundred times. I'm here five times a month. You got fifty bucks in this cage?"

"You'll have to get the manager's signature. And he's out. I can't be expected to remember every visitor to the hotel. It's hard enough keeping track of the guests."

An oath, a sneer from the penny-colored eyes, he slung himself into the elevator.

Five minutes later, a call from 11C. "I'm coming down to change fifty dollars, Miss Schwindleman."

"Swindleman."

"Next time Mr. Lepidus requests a service, I'd greatly appreciate it, Miss Schwindleman."

But Lepidus would never again request a service, and apparently her exchange with him had something to do with it. Her proper

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invocation of a proper regulation. What was the world without rules, she asked the detective, not adding what was appropriate in this instance, that the trouble with the Jews was that they fled rules, claiming that rules had rigged the world against them. That's why they'd had to wander since Christ's time, evading the rules, and then trying to make up for the evasion by sending nickel postcards back to those they fled, the enforcers, hoping for a more than even break the next time. Could she cash checks for everyone who walked in off the gutters? The Puerto Ricans stood six deep between Columbus and Amsterdam. Give them an opportunity like that, and they'd make the Jews, who were clever or mean enough to be pikers, look honest. She'd worked nearly thirty years around other people's money, and nobody had ever suspected that her purse held one cent that didn't belong there. She personally had nothing to lose or gain by enforcement of the rules. Rules was what she went and lived by. Did Lepidus think she was a country girl waiting for wool to be pulled over her eyes? So his temper was riled. What did that have to do with rules? What did what happened have to do with anything but the breaking of rules?

According to Mendel, he and Lepidus had worked as usual. When he, Mendel, was indisposed, they worked at the hotel. It was just as convenient as the closet they operated in on Fourth Avenue. Gotham Fabrics and Designs. A big name for a small enterprise. Two men, two desks, cardboard patterns, sample materials, drawing paper, colored pencils. Not enough for a child's Christmas. That's all they needed to carry off twelve to fifteen thousand a year. "I've been with lots of outfits, big and small," said Mendel up in his room where she'd never been before. "There was nothing more efficient in the world than that Lepidus and myself. I designed. He marketed. That's all there was to it. I had pencils, he had connections. Three or four days a week was all the time we needed to put in. Didn't matter where, down on the Avenue or here in the hotel."

That was the Lepidus-Mendel history. But every history has a history, and who more than the wandering Jews, barnacling themselves on the histories of every nation on the civilized earth, would know that. A squad of Irish cops, Annalee Swindleman, and assorted old ladies, half of them under the earth now, had witnessed Mendel going berserk with a metal stand-up lamp. Other incidents made longer history. The punched customer in Buffalo, and a doorman in Minnie

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Schlag's building who, according to her, had the habit of stepping on Mendel's small foot until the latter, after years of the abuse, had one day grabbed the fellow by the voice box, toppled him, and tried to throttle him there in the snow of Lexington Avenue. Yes, the huge woman went on, in some ways, he reminded her of a man she'd known in Vienna, also a docile young man till seized with rages. Luckily she mentioned the young man's name, and the detective wrote her off as a nut. Miss Swindleman, who had listened to her along with Mendel, shook with anger. There was more history to come, this time from Sonny, the ex-furniture mover and photographer, recently returned from his sunny stay in the American Southwest. Yes, moaned Sonny, his father had raised him and his brother on a diet that would have done in a robot; by the time he was twelve, he'd eaten enough cabbage soup and kreplach to have felled a squadron of horses. Also, his father entered into frequent altercations with a waiter named Bungmeier in Sheffrin's Delicatessen, capped one day when his father stuffed Bungmeier's gray head into a plateful of borscht after being rightfully accused of dawdling over his meals.

After all this, Mendel's own story of the day did not look strong. The story was that Lepidus had been riled by the behavior of the good Miss Schwindleman. Never was Lepidus a cup of tea, but fired up, he was a terror. They had worked hard, in shirt sleeves, though it was drafty, a Christmas cold driving through the peeled window sidings, never strong since the no-goodnik, Sonny, had pushed the armchair through them. Lepidus talked, he, Mendel, was all concentration. When he designed, he was lost in his materials. Lepidus had started on Miss Schwindleman: piss-cold, anti-semitischer virgin-whore were the easiest things he said. (Blushing, head averted from her stricken head.) Then he was on to the Winthrop, the flea-bag where he, Mendel, too cheap to waste piss in a pot, had holed himself up for thirty years, killing his wife with the cold and inflicting two loonies, the junior Mendels, on the world. "A Hitler with his mouth, he was," said Mendel to Detective Milligan. "A marketer, he had talent for the mouth." But he, Mendel, could take it. He was small, he was old, but he could take it. He kept on cutting his patterns. Not from cowardice, he was afraid of nobody. He took where it did no good to do something about it. Years he had taken guff from Miss Schwindleman. Why not? What could she do, poor old girl—head averted, lost in his materials—poor old cold bag, full of hate, collecting

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her postcards from a world she understood nothing of. Years he had taken insults from family, wife, bosses, sons, doormen, policemen, waiters, inhuman cabbies, but now and then, once in a great while, he had to strike out. The Jews had a history of taking it. Nevertheless, sometimes they turned. The Maccabees. Suez. Jews were not Hindus, not cheek-turners. For humanity, for peace, for an end to persecution, they rose up. Lepidus wouldn't stop; he got hotter and hotter. He, Mendel, caught fire and gave him a push. One push. The window sidings were weak, Lepidus was small, and solid. Out he went into the middle of Eighty-sixth Street under the nose of Lester knifing a tail feather from a pigeon. Out he went, like garbage from a Puerto Rican window. Unpremeditated, unintended, the victim victimizing, and being victimized thereby.

Miss Swindleman, looking up at the detective without the protection of her staves, minus the glowing backdrop of her Collection, smaller, chaired, sworn—though without Bible—to honesty, a gray-girl from the Ozarks up in the bejewed city, thought back thirty years. Every morning she walked through Central Park to the Hotel. Every year it seemed bigger to her. This morning, all the familiar trees were there, branched in snow, imploring the New York sky to spare them. Bushes and shrubs were turned into crystal chandeliers, the buds alive somewhere in them, unseen but living in the icy beads, waiting. Walking in her furred galoshes around the Reservoir, she'd looked through the crackling trees toward the General Motors sign flashing "8:23," and thought that she had not one single postcard in her collection from New York. It would have been perfectly all right to send herself one, for, after all, she'd traveled from her home and was still a visitor in this place, as much a wanderer as the poor black Jews she served and governed. Frescos from Ravenna, bark-colored farmers from Sierra Leone, twisted statues from Rotterdam, skyscrapers from Milan, mountains, rivers, pyramids, but nothing of this city where she and almost everyone else she knew was a wanderer. Her stopover, Mendel's stopover, this old-line hotel was rotting, facade intact, but pipes going—a geyser had burst from a flushed toilet only last week—and the wanderers were the only thing that sustained it, these deprived people, harboring their small-time leisure, their miserable quarters. Mendel was one of the best. Polite, quiet, he hurt no one that didn't hurt him much more. The wife had seemed a good one, but who knew? Behind the flutter she could have given plenty.

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After all, she let her boys grow up in this hotel, went gladly to restaurants, avoided kitchen work. Maybe Mendel had not had much from her. He hadn't had much period. A monk amidst the barrage of Eighty-Sixth Street. Cheapskate, but no quibbler. As for Lepidus, he was the blackest of the black, yes, nasty, cigar-chewing, scoffer, crook, a hurrier and worrier—of others. If she had riled him, well and good. If Mendel had pushed him, he deserved it. She spoke the truth, always had, had no reason not to.

So it was over, and Milligan wrote it up. *Accidental.* Miss Swindleman went back to her den.

Things were not the same. No. An opening had been made. What does one do about an opening? Send a postcard of the Empire State Building to oneself? Go to Mendel's room and say, "Mendel. I saved you. Now save me. I'm yours. Be mine"?

Or even, think more gently, speak more kindly—"blank cold, anti-semitischer virgin-whore." "No, Lepidus"—cash checks more readily, make up delinquent quarters from one's own purse?

Possibly.

The opening was a wound in Miss Swindleman. Days passed, and embarrassment at defending Mendel was all she could stuff in to stop the raw ache. She was altered, but alteration had nowhere to go.

The incident had altered Mendel much more. He grew thinner, whiter. He no longer sat in the lobby. More and more frequent were the calls to Sheffrin for borscht and pastrami. Two or three times he came down for coffee and English muffins in The Nook. He bought a TV set, and the bellhops reported that it was on from Garroway to the Anthem. There was no more work, and no visitors except a monthly call from Burton, the timetable son, who, like his father, never frowned or smiled, and whose only non-ambulatory motion was the Adam's Apple popping up and down in his neck as he swallowed unuttered words. So Mendel passed on in his own den—pneumonia, TB, heart. Everything hit him at once.

The day after he died, she took the first notice of her Collection that she had taken since the 'hearing,' six months before. It was in wretched shape. The pasteboards were rotting: gnarled scabs of string dripped from the edges, odd swellings humped the boards where drafts and radiator heat had attacked the fibers. She called the bellboys and told them to take it out to the garbage heap. The wandering was over.

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Patricia Marx

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROLF HOCHHUTH

MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, *The Deputy* is your first play to be published. Had you been thinking of writing a drama before you became interested in this subject?

HOCHHUTH: No, I had not started a play before *The Deputy*; and, before that, I wrote non-dramatic prose.

MARX: Why did you decide to treat such a vast historical subject in the form of a play?

HOCHHUTH: Because I believe that this subject is, in itself, such that a play is the appropriate form, especially when you consider that the argument of the play hardly had to be invented by me, but could be taken directly from actual events—I mean, Gerstein bursting in upon the Papal Nuncio. I believe that in a play historical events can be marshalled toward the dramatic climax, and different points of view can be made to clash more sharply, and forcefully, than in a work of fiction.

Also, I felt challenged by the notion of writing a play in free verse—something that had been ignored in German literature for some forty years; to be precise, since *Der Rosenkavalier* and other works by Hofmannsthal. Whereas, in England and America, it was common practice; Christopher Fry and T. S. Eliot are instances. And I was particularly influenced by Auden's *The Age of Anxiety*.

MARX: Why did you use free verse rather than prose?

HOCHHUTH: That, too, hinges on the choice of the dramatic form. Free verse carries its speaker along much more readily than prose, especially when it concerns a subject which is so closely involved with contemporary events and depends so extensively on historical documents. Then, things must be transposed, heightened by language. Otherwise it would often sound as if one were merely quoting from the documents.

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Of course, the choice of a heightened language—whether we convey it through free verse, or however—was made easier for me by the milieu of the play. Anyone who talks, for example, to high church dignitaries, will find that they do not speak in an ordinary, everyday language, but that they express themselves, as a matter of course, in a more ceremonial manner—as it were, words on cothurni. I do not think, however, that it is still possible to write a drama in classical verse form, when the characters are people from our walk of life.

MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, did you feel constrained, as an artist, to be historically accurate? Was there a conflict between you as an artist, and you as an historian?

HOCHHUTH: Only inasmuch as writing a play about events that lie only two decades behind us required a much more intensive research into historical documents than if one were writing, say, a play about Luther.

MARX: How did the idea for the play present itself? How did it take shape?

HOCHHUTH: It all happened a long time ago, and it is very hard for me to reconstruct exactly how it began. I think I took down a few notes, referring to the character of Gerstein, because my idea was to write a short story about him—quite a long time ago.

Later, however, in 1956, I met a man in Austria who had helped with the gassing in Auschwitz. He had been transferred there as political punishment. And I read accounts which referred back to this subject. Then it first became clear to me what the form of the play must be.

Also, at that time, the book, *The Third Reich and the Jews,* which contained the report of Gerstein, was published. And then, in 1958, a book appeared containing the documents concerning the Vatican's attitude toward the deportation of Jews from Rome. At that time, I was living in Münster because my wife was a student there; and I heard accounts of a vain attempt to arrest Bishop Galen—or rather, of the Nazis' hesitation to imprison him. I cannot say more than this. It is now seven years ago. It all fitted itself together like a mosaic.

Then, the actual work on the play began—my daily work on it starting in the spring of 1959.

MARX: How did the Pope enter into the play?

HOCHHUTH: That came about with the consideration—with the question of how, in this so-called Christian Europe, the murder of an entire people could take place without the highest moral authority of this earth having a word to say about it.

MARX: In the beginning, then, the Pope wasn't in the play at all?

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HOCHHUTH: Well, there had appeared, as I said, some documents about the attitude of the Vatican, which have a voice in the play. But it all developed in such a way that the most meaningful antagonist of Riccardo could be none other than the highest moral authority—precisely because he makes a demand which only this highest moral authority can meet.

MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, what writers influenced you the most?

HOCHHUTH: Dramatists did not influence me so much as novelists, or letter-writers.

I am always being asked, for example, why I did not study Brecht. When I started writing, I was so much under the influence of Thomas Mann that everything I wrote painfully echoed this great man. As a beginner, one simply cannot resist him; indeed, there is a very well known German writer who today, in his sixties, is still so much under the spell of Thomas Mann that he has practically no independence, which was very much my case, too. That is why I wanted to prevent, at all costs, something like this happening to me with Brecht, and I went out of my way to ignore him.

Naturally, I read many classical plays: the ancients, and Shakespeare, and also the Germans, including Hauptmann. But my concept of life in the perspective of history was influenced much more by novelists and story-tellers and above all, by the great German historians—by Mommsen, very decisively.

I read him, not for his subject matter, which of course is Roman history, but simply because man's bearing, his historic stance, can most readily be deciphered through the study of history. This, for me, is, and will surely remain, the most interesting area of investigation. I shall never forget (though it does not strictly bear on this) a sentence in Mommsen that really sank in, that I'll probably always carry with me. It concerns an invasion of Sicily. Mommsen writes, with icily laconic concentration: "The men were killed; their women and children distributed among the soldiery." You see, I find that such sentences contain all of history; and, when such insights are later combined with the experiences one has had in one's own time—during the aerial bombardments or just altogether during the Third Reich—then one realizes that history is man's great fatality, and, God knows, a great field of study for the man of letters.

MARX: Many critics feel that your work has greater historical and moral value than artistic value. I wonder what your response is to that evaluation of your play?

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HOCHHUTH: That is a question of who is doing the criticizing. The historians, with few exceptions, find it interesting as literature—and the *literati* find it historically interesting. I cannot defend myself against this, and can only hope that time will sort it all out—and, in any case, I will not allow myself to be deterred from writing about what I find interesting, even if my next play should again be a historical one.

I think that literary criticism, in some measure, was thrown into mild consternation by the fact that someone had, again, written historical drama. None had been written—not for decades, I mean. Brecht's *Galileo* isn't, in the sense I mean, a historical play. But the simple fact that the writing of historical plays is no longer practiced does not mean that one shouldn't try one's hand at it all the same.

It is scarcely conceivable why, for example, a marital drama should be more interesting than a play which deals with, let us say, the extermination of the Albigentians. With this prerequisite, however: a historic drama today, I believe, is legitimate only when the author makes use of history merely as a blueprint from which to construct the behavior of man in our time. When he is, in other words, not merely giving a picture of the times, a giant fresco of the past, but is concerned with something indicative, with characters who behave in a way significant of our actions and feelings. The condescension with which a few—and it was only a few—men of letters tried to dismiss me as a mere historiographer, especially funny because it is particularly in the realm of literature that I conquered new ground, at least in Germany, by writing the first verse play we have these days.

I am highly sceptical of the fuss which is made about novels, novels that have no bearing on reality and that are each time celebrated as a great event for some four weeks by twenty-two people.

I must tell you that when I recently saw Ingmar Bergman's *The Silence,* I left that Hamburg movie house with the question, "What is there left for the novelist today?" Think of what Bergman can do with a single shot of his camera, up a street, down a corridor, into a woman's armpit. Of all he can say without saying a single word. The entire film consists perhaps of three pages of typescript. What then can a novelist offer of comparable interest with mere words?

MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, how does this relate to the drama? Is it the same thing to some degree?

HOCHHUTH: I don't think that the drama faces the same problem. Film has this more pronouncedly epic, narrative character, whereas drama is tied to theses, to the conflict of ideas. These are things that a film cannot tackle in its non-verbal way, such as the confronting of argu-

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ments with counter-arguments. The drama cannot dispense with words. In film, the narrative element may well be bound up much more with the image that can be conjured up without words, if one only knows how to command one's camera.

MARX: Are you thinking of writing a film yourself?

HOCHHUTH: Never. I lack the technical orientation and know-how. But if something I have written lends itself to being adapted to the film, all good and well as far as I'm concerned.

MARX: What did you mean earlier, Mr. Hochhuth, when you referred to history as fatality?

HOCHHUTH: I'm influenced in this by various writers, like Theodor Lessing, the author of *History as Rationale of the Irrational.* Theodor Lessing's very life was depressing proof of the rightness of his thesis. In 1933, he was shot to death by the Nazis as he sat in his study.

Even as a boy of thirteen I felt history in a very blunt, subconscious, sub-intellectual way, as a fatality that has sway over us and against which we can defend ourselves only very partially.

MARX: To what degree is man responsible for his own fate or his own actions, then?

HOCHHUTH: I have just been involved in a heated debate with a German periodical which accused me of being so very primitive in my thinking as still to maintain that it is great men who make history. And that I have not been aware of the fact that this is not so. But the periodical did not say who, then, does make history; and I am very much of the opinion that the history of World War II would have looked very different if Hitler and Churchill had never been born. And indeed I would subscribe to the notion that it would be the end of the drama if one were to take the position that man cannot be held responsible for his fate.

At the end of my "Historical Sidelights," I quote Melchinger. "But if the individual can no longer be held responsible, either because he is no longer in a position to decide or else does not understand that he must decide, then we have an alibi for all guilt. And that would mean the end of drama. For 'there can be no suspense without freedom of decision in each given case.' "

MARX: How can this be reconciled with the idea of history as fatality, then?

HOCHHUTH: This contradiction *is* the fatality. Man is meant to act, to be responsible. He should be the master of his fate. He should be moral, and history continually brings him into conflict with powers which condemn him to defeat, which are stronger than he and which

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destroy him. I am thoroughly of the opinion that this is an area which should be of interest even to the gentlemen of literature. Consider merely one very fruitful example: obligatory military conscription in this twentieth century. Compulsory military service is an invention of the French Revolution as much as is the secret police and has completely changed the lives of people.

Consider only what irresoluble conflicts arise from the fact that as one completes his eighteenth year, he is simply forced to put on a uniform and start shooting.

MARX: But if you're being attacked by an enemy, isn't it necessary that you defend your country?

HOCHHUTH: Absolutely. I am not a pacifist at all because I'm of the opinion that it is irresponsible to allow oneself to be driven into traps. Imagine simply what would have happened if the Russians in 1941 had not defended themselves against the Nazis. What would have become of the Russian people? However, for the Russian soldier this did not produce a tragic situation, or hardly. He was fighting for his country. A tragic situation occurred for any particular Russian soldier, who was a passionate anti-Communist and who none the less had to fight with the Communist army against the invaders, for the benefit of Communism just as much as for the benefit of his country. This same kind of tragic situation occurred, of course, for many Germans, who could not possibly have wished that Hitler should triumph but who no more wished that the Russians should march all the way to the Rhine. Indeed there is no human conflict possible, conflict, let us say, in marriage or in love or anywhere else, which does not get its most fundamental intensification in the context of history.

MARX: In the context of history as fatality, how would you define the Pope's guilt or responsibility in terms of not protesting against the slaughter of the Jews?

HOCHHUTH: That is a question whose answer cannot possibly be reduced to a simple formula. So very many things have contributed to the Pope's behaving as he, unfortunately, did. Looking at it purely from the outside, one can say, for instance, that fatality began with the fact that on the very eve of the Second World War Pope Pius XI, who was a very brave and very resolute man, should have died. Furthermore, again looking from the outside, it may have been only a coincidence, but then again perhaps truly fatality, that his successor should have been a Pope who in his perfectly legitimate predilection for everything German, for the German people, overlooked the fact that the Nazis were not "The Germans" but the despoilers, the perverters of Germany, as well as of everything else.

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MARX: Granting the fact that the Nazis might have retaliated, do you feel that the Pope should have protested anyway?

HOCHHUTH: Absolutely. And I would say this not merely off the top of my head but out of the very reasons which Riccardo cites in his conversation with his father in the second act of my play. This is emphatically substantiated in the play, always presupposing that one takes the office of the Pope seriously, and that one is really ready to measure this man by his own pretensions, which are of course enormous.

MARX: Was the Pope then under a different kind of moral obligation toward his fellow man than a man of another faith?

HOCHHUTH: Well, the Catholic Church lays claim to being the only church that bestows salvation. It should naturally devolve on it to feel responsible for all human beings, all religions, all races. This is all the more so—though many Catholic priests deny it—because Pius XII had without doubt no anti-Semitic feelings. You might be interested, if we have a little time, in hearing an anecdote which was actually the most terrifying experience I had since the publication of my play.

I received a visit one day from a very intelligent, older, and quite well-known Jesuit priest, who spent an entire Sunday with my wife and me, chatting. What this man said so enormously frightened me that twice I countered him with a quotation which stands at the very beginning of my play, and comes from Bernard Shaw, "Beware of the man whose God is in Heaven." This Jesuit father spoke to me as follows: "If humanism were right, but humanism is only a fashion, then you too would be right in your play. For man is not really the measure of all things. Antiquity is wrong when it asserts that man is the measure of all things." And he went on, literally: "Man is excrement, at least in the aspect of eternity."

And that, presumably, is to this day—much more than she admits it—the view of the Church. The Jesuit went on, "Certainly it is frightful, what was done to the Jews and to the 56 million people of all faiths who were devoured by the Second World War, but then again it is not *so* frightful, because all of them are with God, not one of them was lost. They are all preserved. No soul is lost, not even that of Hitler or of Himmler. Before God this will all someday become unsubstantial and forgiven." And he went on, "The Bible has an example ready which really cuts the ground out from under *The Deputy.*" And he said, "Jesus did not lift a finger to have St. John the Baptist rescued from Herod's prison, for obviously Jesus must have felt that this man had fulfilled his mission on earth." I, on the other hand, not being conversant with the historical circumstances of that

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particular time, asked: "Father, was Jesus in a position to do something about that in the first place?"

The Jesuit could not answer my question precisely, but he said that he believed Jesus could have acted because he already had the people very much on his side. I said to him then, because his tremendous hardness impressed me, "Father, I am ready to believe that you would not bat an eyelash if you were informed that in ten minutes you would be beheaded." He smiled at that. He liked that. I then continued, "I also believe that you would not bat an eyelash if you were in the cell of a human being who, five minutes later, would be executed." And on this Sunday I became cognizant for the first time of what bottomless cunning lurks in the Church's insistence on celibacy. That these priests are obliged to live alone, that they do not have a single human being to whom they can get thoroughly attached. They have no child, no wife, and this gives them that unbelievable hardness, which enables them to reckon years, not in the terms of a human life, but incommensurably under the aspect of eternity. They are not permitted to live. They are not permitted to have a life of their own, and therefore life itself, the life of other people, is not of the same consequence to them as life is for those to whom that is all there is.

And it is from this position—I am now completely clear about this—that the Church was able, from the beginning, to draw the strength to demand for 2,000 years such unheard of sacrifices and victims. This brutality is true of all great promulgators of ideas. So, too, the Nazis were willing to sacrifice one half of the German people in the Second World War because they felt they were building an empire, a kingdom of a thousand years. The Bolshevists, too, reckon not in our measures of time but in terms of centuries. They do not think of the happiness of the living but in terms of generations and generations to come—that eventually things will become better. But it is always terribly inhuman to think in this way.

MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, your characterization of the Pope emphasizes his concern for earthly things, such as factories and the political realities of Europe vs. Russia. Were you at that time unaware of his transcendental view of life?

HOCHHUTH: Well, first of all, I must say that in no part of my play did I submit that the financial concerns of the Vatican caused the silence of the Pope. That I did not maintain anywhere. I put the scene dealing with finances before the actual drama concerning the deportation of the Jews from Rome because I'm thoroughly of the opinion that the Vatican does indeed have very substantial earthly

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interests, but I do not reproach it with that. I must, however, add that this conversation with the Jesuit did not occur until after the appearance of my play, and that today it seems very good for me that this conversation occurred as late as it did. I am now firmly convinced that this calculation in terms of eons, of gigantic chunks of time, played its part in the Pope's decision. But even today I would hardly dare to represent the Pope with this kind of metaphysical hardness. Let us hope that he was really concerned with the political and historical arguments, the charitable arguments, which are proposed in the fourth act as his motivation, and that it was these arguments alone which brought him to this awful decision. If it were otherwise, then the decision and indeed the Church itself would have to be conceived of as altogether inimical to life. I found this attitude of the Jesuit extremely inimical to life and indeed I told him so. But this did not concern him very much, for life is, for him, not the first and last consideration, whereas to us ordinary mortals who are not firmly embedded in our faith—and who is nowadays?—to us, life is very much the first and last concern.

That Pius XII himself, of course, was influenced by this kind of ecclesiastic thinking or that he embodied it himself to a very large degree is proven in any case by a speech which I transcribed and included in my fourth act. A speech he made about the Poles when, in their need and despair, they asked him for help:

"As the flowers of the countryside wait beneath winter's mantle of snow for the warm breezes of spring, so the Jews must wait, praying and trusting that the hour of heavenly comfort will come."

I didn't change anything in this except one single word. Instead of the word "Poles" I used the word "Jews." That is the whole story.

MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, is a religious faith in another world inimical to the kind of humanism that you value? Is it a necessary consequence of this belief that human life is not taken seriously on this earth?

HOCHHUTH: For God's sake, no. Faith is a good thing, and I envy any human being who is firmly established in it. But he must not, or he should not, be led by his faith into any kind of neglect of the matters of this earth. Obviously our turn will come, the turn of all of us, someday; and probably everyone has at least for a moment of every day, the feeling of resignation toward the things of this earth. A moment when he knows that to founder here below is the ultimate, that which is destined for all of us, no matter how great our earthly involvement, no matter how great our ambition. Then it is very good to have faith. Then it is probably the sole salvation to have faith.

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But as long as we have the courage or the brutality to bring children into this world, a world which, for example, has an atom bomb in it, for that long we must not reckon in terms of eternity, and, out of regard for eternity, neglect our earthly involvements.

MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, would you care to define or describe your own religious views?

HOCHHUTH: At the utmost, I can quote a saying of Bismarck's, which has perhaps been made use of all too little, even though it should be of help to the intellectuals.

A friend once asked Bismarck how he had overcome the radical nihilism of his youth. He said, "I recalled the advance patrols of my doubts, which had ventured too far forward, with all firmness." In other words, an act of the will, and probably that is the only way it can be done. One cannot wait for grace to bestow faith upon one.

MARX: Do you mean that it's a matter of will to quell doubts and to accept a faith?

HOCHHUTH: I think that absolutely, that it is an act of the will, because, after all, we are daily attacked by doubts and could not live if we did not chase them back into the corner.

MARX: Is there any principle that guides you in regard to what things you will choose to believe in?

HOCHHUTH: I don't believe so, but I haven't thought enough about it. I think that the personal experiences of every individual life, which will be different from one person to another, must be the determining factor.

MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, you were only fourteen at the end of the war. How do you feel that you would have behaved if you had been a responsible adult during the war?

HOCHHUTH: I would have behaved just as well or as badly as all other contemporaries. I am sure that I would not have been a particularly brave fellow. I think it also depends on whether one has a family or not. I find that there are many excuses, very legitimate excuses, for fathers of families, who know that they have children, that they have a wife, who will be killed if they, the men, dare go too far. That should not be overlooked by us today.

MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, were the actions of Riccardo, the central figure of the play, the ones that you respect the most? Was his behavior, leading to his martyrdom, the only right way to act?

HOCHHUTH: For artistic reasons I tried of course, to make Riccardo a living human being, with all the contradictions that entails. He was not to become a mere moral trumpeter, but a human being who

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makes mistakes, who goes too far, who overshoots the mark, who, for instance, considers Hitler's chances in Russia much better than they actually were, which was exactly what his contemporaries did at the time. Or if you think of that central passage in the drama, Riccardo's foolhardy decision to do away with the Pope and to make the SS take the rap for the murder, in order to mobilize the world's indignation against them. This scene, to be sure, is not intended realistically at all. It is merely a vehicle for pushing theoretical thought to its extreme limits. This is why I cannot answer your question with an unqualified yes. But the essential concern of Riccardo, the moral impetus which propels him, and his coming out strongly for the victims—this I find indeed to be essentially what one should have expected of the priests in such a situation, and what many of them, more than a thousand, actually did.

MARX: Would you expect this from a man who is not a Catholic?

HOCHHUTH: It cannot be expected or demanded of anyone. One cannot even demand it of a priest. The determination to become a martyr is a very personal decision which not even the Pope can demand of his priests. But this is why I laid the scene of the deportation of the Jews in Rome, the Pope's own diocese, where the Pope was personally, as an individual, as Eugene Pacelli, confronted with this problem and able to make a personal decision.

MARX: If you can't demand martyrdom, where do you place limits on what you can expect of a moral human being?

HOCHHUTH: That is a very important question. You yourself said before that I established in great detail all the diplomatic opportunities of the Vatican toward the co-signatory of the Concordat, Hitler. Opportunities which would not have placed the Church in danger, but which could nonetheless have been exploited to resist Hitler. These should have been fully exploited: anything that within the realm of diplomacy could have been mustered up by way of threats against Hitler. But beyond that I would say that the Pope also had the duty to obligate the countless Catholics in the East—in Poland, in Hungary, for example, and also certainly the Catholics in Germany—to obligate them not to participate in mass murder. It is inconceivable how many people could have been saved just in Poland if the population had been summoned by the Church to offer Jews a hiding place.

MARX: So short of martyrdom or risking the lives of Catholics, you feel that it was incumbent upon the Pope and the Church to do what they could for the welfare of the Jews.

HOCHHUTH: Of course.

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MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, several times in the play you mention that characters in the play now hold responsible positions in Germany. Does the possibility of a resurgence of Nazism disturb you?

HOCHHUTH: I wasn't thinking of any particular persons. I was inventing my personages freely, except, of course, for those who are historical figures. I consider it completely out of the question that a new wave of National Socialism is to be feared in Germany. The Germans have been burnt, and a burnt child fears the fire. I think they are cured for this century. What our great-grandchildren will do, we do not know. But I do not believe that, in view of the bad odor National Socialism has acquired, the neighbors of a new Hitler would permit him to come to power in the first place. Let us hope not, anyway.

However, there's an exception which we must mention here. There are those as yet underdeveloped countries which have just acquired their independence, like Egypt, in which nationalism is, at the moment, bearing terrible fruits.

MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, you have called this an age of fence-sitters. Who do you feel is guilty of fence-sitting now, and about what things are we not committing ourselves that we should take stands on?

HOCHHUTH: I meant that somewhat differently. I said that I consider it fatal if we allow ourselves to be influenced by the chitchat of the editorial writers about our living in an age of the masses, which, naturally, is true to some extent. But we must not allow this to induce a person to think only of his impotence, and not of the fact that as an individual he must always bear the responsibility not only for his family but for the entire community.

One must breed a sense of responsibility. It must begin at school. This naturally presupposes that even the intellectuals should clearly realize that even the least significant salesgirl who was born, perhaps, in a tenement, and who never reads a book and never goes to the theatre, is a human being like ourselves and that her face is to be respected just as much, do you understand, as our own. And that we ourselves, if we must speak about the masses, have to be quite conscious of our belonging to these masses just as much as that salesgirl. Even as we wish to be respected as individuals within the mass, and so respect ourselves, we must see the individual equally in every other person whatever his class. I believe that that is a good working principle for the inculcation of individual responsibility.

MARX: What do you feel is the most effective way of teaching this sense of responsibility?

HOCHHUTH: I am not a pedagogue, but to reduce it to a formula, man

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should be taught to see in every one of his fellows, be he ever so fleabitten and personally distasteful, a creature to be respected as an individual, as a creature of God, just like oneself.

MARX: Are there any other themes or subjects about which you feel you could write as forceful and dramatic a play as *The Deputy?*

HOCHHUTH: Oh, yes. But by this I do not wish to imply that I will again be lucky enough to write as good a play, if I have written a good play at all. But themes of this sort exist, alas, in multitudes.

MARX: What would these themes be, for instance?

HOCHHUTH: Well, take for example that appalling fact which began to establish itself in European history only since the 'twenties, but which has since then established itself ever more firmly. In the First World War, as far as I know, it was still an unthinkable thing that both warring factions should, without so much as stopping to think, implicate individuals, civilians, in the military action. No soldier then who had any sense of honor in him would have shot without hesitation at women and children. The Second World War, and previous to that, the Spanish Civil War, (just think of Picasso's picture, "Guernica") were to institute it as a matter of most idiotic fact for both sides to wage war quite naturally against open cities. This might be a good subject for a play: to what exent is a soldier obligated to refuse the command to kill civilians?

Now you might be of the opinion that this is a banal question, a platitude. But I believe that the topics which are of the greatest concern to all of us are always these very banalities, subject matters which are, as it were, lying around in the street, waiting to be picked up. The subject matter of *The Deputy* was also lying in the street. I would be inclined to say that it could become an artistic program to pick up those topics off the streets.

MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, what is your artistic program for the future?

HOCHHUTH: I would like to write a play and then three or four short stories, if I can.

MARX: Do you already have a subject for the play?

HOCHHUTH: Yes, certainly, but it is as yet a little too complicated to speak about it, and above all things, it would be premature because I am still working on the plot outline and am not quite certain about the direction in which things will develop. It isn't as if one were in full command of one's material beforehand. To begin with the material commands the writer. One must find a way of grasping and shaping it.

MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, before *The Deputy* was published and per-

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formed you were not a particularly well-known figure in Germany. What effect has fame had on you personally?

HOCHHUTH: I was completely unknown. I edited books, as thousands of other people do. Editions of the classics. But otherwise I was totally unheard of.

MARX: How did this sudden attention affect you?

HOCHHUTH: It frightened me, but it also had its good side, I hope. It brought me many friends—not my reputation, but my book. Many friends whom I otherwise would never have met and who now enrich my life. I might add, of course, that such great repercussions stemming from one's first play place a considerable mortgage on one's next play, even before it is written. And it is my great concern, which preoccupies me day and night, whether with my new play, or with any new literary work, I will be able to fulfill what is now expected of me.

MARX: Mr. Hochhuth, I want to thank you very much for this interview.

HOCHHUTH: I want to thank you. It was a truly pleasant afternoon, and I really had a good time, although I would not have thought it possible that I could still enjoy talking about my play. Thank you.

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POEMS

TIME

for B. V. Winebaum

Ever that Everest
Among concepts, as prize for fruitful
Grapplings with which
The solved crossword puzzle has now and then
Eclipsed Blake's 'Sun-Flower'
(Not that one wanted a letter changed in either)
And jazz believed at seventeen
So parodied the slopes
That one mistook the mountain for a cloud . . .

Or there was blesséd Patience:
Fifty-two chromosomes permitting
Trillions of "lives"—some few
Triumphant, the majority
Blocked, doomed, yet satisfying, too,
In that with each, before starting over,
You could inquire beneath
The snowfield, the vine-monogram, the pattern
Of winged cyclists, to where the flaw lay
Crocus-clean, a trail inching between
Sheer heights and drops, and reach what might have been.

All day you had meant to write letters,
Turn the key in certain friendships,
Be ticked through at dusk
By hard, white, absent faces.

Let's say you went so far
As to begin: "It's me! Forgive . . ."

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Too late. From the alcove
Came the cough, the whimper
Of the old man whom sunset wakes.
Truly, could you bear another night
Keeping him company while he raved, agreeing
To Persia on horseback—just you two!—when even
The garden path had been forbidden,
He was so feeble. Feeble!

He grasped your pulse
In his big gray-haired hand,
Crevasses opening, numb azure. *Wait*
He breathed and glittered. *You'll regret*
You want to Read my will first Don't
Your old father All he has Be yours

Hours you raised the dark rum to his lips.
Your eyes burned. Your voice said:
"All right, we'll read Cervantes, we'll take trips.
She you loved lives. You'll see her in the morning.
You'll get well. You'll be proud of me. Don't smile!
I love you. I'll find work. You'll—I'll—"

It was light and late.
You could not remember
Sleeping. It hurt to rise.
There stood
Those features' ice-crowned, tanned (by what?)
Landmark, like yours unwrinkled in repose.
Pouring strong tea and hot,
You swiftly wrote:

". . . this long silence. I don't know what's the matter with me. All winter I have been trying to discipline myself—'Empty the mind,' as they say in the handbooks, 'concentrate upon one thing, any thing, the snowflake, the granite it falls upon, the planet risen opposite, etc., etc.'—and failing, failing. Quicksands of leisure! Now summer's

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here, I *think*. Each morning a fog rolls in from the sea. It would lift, perhaps, if you were to come and speak to it. Will you? Do! One catches the ferry at. . . ."

The pen reels from your hand. Were you asleep?
Who were you writing to? Annette? Me? Jake?
Later, smoothing the foothills of the sheet,
You take up your worn pack.

Above their gay crusaders' dress
The monarchs' mouths are pinched and bleak.
Staggering forth in ranks of less and less
Related cards, condemned to the mystique

Of a redeeming One,
An Ace to lead them home, sword, stave, and axe,
Power, Riches, Love, a place to lay them down
In dreamless heaps, the reds, the blacks,

Old Adams and gray Eves
Escort you still. Perhaps this time . . . ?
A Queen in the discarded suit of Leaves,
Earth dims and flattens as you climb

And heaven, darkened, steams
Upon the trembling disk of tea.
Sixty or seventy more games
And you can go the rest alone maybe—

Arriving then at something not unlike
Meaning relieved of sense,
Planting a flag there on that needle peak
Whose diamond grates in the revolving silence.

James Merrill

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A QUESTION OF TIME

Suggesting, in blank verse or rhyme,
To Jack and Joan the theme of time,
I met with instant opposition;
And yet that old man with a mission
Leaning above the sundial shade
Or dreaming while a fountain played
Has prompted many a sigh or saying
From some who stopped to watch him playing.
It seemed dispiriting that one
So linked with water, air and sun,
Respected in so many quarters,
Should languish, and have no supporters.
Time, with so long a pedigree,
Now waited felling, like a tree;
And while they asked for something fresher,
I paused, then yielded under pressure.
There seemed no object in reclaiming
One who had once required our taming.

What now? In all themes they propose
I recognize what I first chose.
You cannot tame with hoe or mattock
That wild horse racing round the paddock,
And they alone find freedom who
Ride him above the shade he threw.
In dream or action, pain or pleasure,
Beneath all beats a hooflike measure.
Whether the season sow or spend,
Moving to its predicted end,
Air has a point which every swallow
Finds in the sky to touch and follow.
The law of time, there disobeyed,
Defines the leaf which cannot fade.
Imagination, young yet older,

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But reads behind true age's shoulder
And shadows on a timeless page
The moment's truth, distinct from age.

Vernon Watkins

NATURALLY THE FOUNDATION WILL BEAR YOUR EXPENSES

Hurrying to catch my Comet
    One dark November day,
Which soon would snatch me from it
    To the sunshine of Bombay,
I pondered pages Berkeley
    Not three weeks since had heard,
Perceiving Chatto darkly
    Through the mirror of the Third.

Crowds, colourless and careworn,
    Had made my taxi late,
Yet not till I was airborne
    Did I recall the date—
That day when Queen and Minister
    And Band of Guards and all
Still act their solemn-sinister
    Wreath-rubbish in Whitehall.

It used to make me throw up,
    These mawkish nursery games:
O when will England grow up?
    —But I outsoar the Thames,
And dwindle off down Auster
    To greet Professor Lal
(He once met Morgan Forster),
    My contact and my pal.

Philip Larkin

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THE TUNNEL

A man has been standing
in front of my house
for days. I peek at him
from the living room
window and at night,
unable to sleep,
I shine my flashlight
down on the lawn.
He is always there.

After a while
I open the front door
just a crack and order
him out of my yard.
He narrows his eyes
and moans. I slam
the door and dash back
to the kitchen, then up
to the bedroom, then down.

I weep like a schoolgirl
and make obscene gestures
through the window. I
write large suicide notes
and place them so he
can read them easily.
I destroy the living
room furniture to prove
I own nothing of value.

When he seems unmoved
I decide to dig a tunnel
to a neighboring yard.

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I seal the basement off
from the upstairs with
a brick wall. I dig hard
and in no time the tunnel
is done. Leaving my pick
and shovel below,

I come out in front of a house
and stand there too tired to
move or even speak, hoping
someone will help me.
I feel I'm being watched
and sometimes I hear
a man's voice,
but nothing is done
and I have been waiting for days.

Mark Strand

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LETTER FROM LONDON

THE ENGLAND SCENE

I left New York by air which means that I left without really departing. Travel doesn't go with transit anymore. It is as if something happened to you on the spot, altering you without taking you anywhere. This process has always reminded me of something I learned when I studied chemistry—the phenomenon of allomorphism. That's what it's like to travel by jet. You are converted into an allomorph of yourself without ever really quitting the point of departure. You step into a sealed vessel, the engines are switched on, the pressure rises and six hours later, fifteen minutes after you have left, the furnace is tapped and you've turned from diamond into graphite. Travel has become transmutation. New impressions bend their way into the mind at an unfamiliar angle, breaking up into an odd spectrum of feelings and responses. So that just at the moment of getting back home by air, at the interface of one's changed self and the once familiar scene, there are set up all sorts of chromatic aberrations. My first sensation, on getting back to England after two years away had really nothing to do with the special occasion itself.

The most powerful feelings were those of a more general sort, connected with the abstract condition of arrival. There was a contentless impression of paradox. Without any specific item contained in the feeling, I simply felt newly familiar. The palpable and visible objects responsible for this impression were somehow not given. Both the landscape and the people seemed weak and wan, at a distance, as such things are, during convalescence from a serious illness, in that stage of invalid indifference when the mind is empty of objects but flooded with pale nuance.

Then bits of real sensation began to creep back. Everyone suddenly loomed up big and pink with raw cheeks, irregular teeth and those grey, uncooked eyes set in brimming lids. Cab drivers were scuttling helpfully about, in vast baggy trousers and plantigrade, bungy-soled shoes. The whole airport seemed to be staffed by these *jolis laids*. Then, as the taxi sped along in the temperate spring sunshine, one saw more and more *young* people. There were slim, lissome androgyne couples,

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pausing unconcerned at the curb—mop-haired totties and *louche* lads. The plane *had* been a Time Machine and England had spun on two thousand years during the six hour flight. The Eloi had taken over; lovely teen lollipops strutted about, beautifully tricked out in a camp sort of way, while middle aged Morlocks went about their prosaic biz. The London teen scene is *very* different from New York. It's cool and cocky—very modern, but cursed perhaps too by an unsettling indifference maudite. There *were* those holiday riots. Blown up, of course, by the press; but at the Bank holiday weekend, the creaking smelly trains to the sea *were* packed with natty narcissists looking for a giggle and a light-hearted punch-up on the sands.

It was a field day for the news hungry summer press and the Beaverbrook photographers splashed their front pages with big pictures of the turmoil. The one I liked best seemed to have been taken from the air, high above the beach at Margate, showing a black, dehiscent swarm of young Mods, racing like little swastikas across the sand. In the left hand bottom corner some abandoned deck chairs ballooned in the wind of their approach. A good snip for Canetti.

Next day came the vindictively self-righteous editorials and letters from the Morlocks. A certain Dr. Simpson, a Margate JP, came out as the hero of the occasion, praised all round for his brave invective as he handed out whacking fines to the "useless defectives" before him in the Toytown dock and next day we got an improving, full page snap of "the real hero of the Margate sands" . . . the Solomonic Doc himself, strolling thoughtfully along the now deserted beach.

Strangely enough, in the midst of all this alarm and adult irritation there was much less talk of beating and flogging than there would have been, say, three years ago. There was plenty of verbal violence, mostly betraying a sad, middle-aged envy for the swish and gaiety of modern English youth, but the flagellant fury of yesteryear has vanished. Or has it? Perhaps it's just been driven into a photo-pornographic annex of the mind. The little Soho Art-Books-and-Mags shops are crowded with studiously casual middle-aged men of an afternoon, idly turning the pages of the girlie mags until they can get a turn to riffle through the packets of "pics" in the little cubicle at the back of the shop. Here, in two or three file cabinet drawers are packed about fifty cellophane wrapped packets of photos, broadly classified into "flag," "bondage," "lesb duos" or "straight perv." "Straight perv," which turns out to be the boring old two backed monster with variations, takes up relatively little space by comparison with your "lesb duos" and "flag" tableaux which sell like hot cakes at fifteen shillings a set.

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And what you get for your cash is just four glossy snaps of an improvised charade of bare-bottom beating, with, more often than not, a couple of obviously giggling, half-hearted tarts pulling each others' knicks down in a small back bedroom in Meard Street. Sometimes they make a go of decor and the photographic studio is got up to look a bit like a dungeon or perhaps a schoolroom. All rather unconvincing since one can usually make out a record player in the blurred background, and a pile of André Kostelanetz records. Ay me the woods decay and fall! Style has fled from the flagellant scene and since Gresham's law seems to operate as much in Pornography as it does anywhere, the cheap photographic "tat" of today has driven out the more voluptuous currency of old fashioned sadism. Just once in a while though, amongst the glossy flagi-pics a perplexing pack of nineteenth drawings appear in photostat. Suddenly one is back in the world of nuns swooning beneath the lash of cruel abbesses, pale, furious governesses, darting eyes and all the other desperate equipment of the romantic agony. But on the whole Swinburne has given way to Stephen Ward and the fatal luxuries of Our Lady of Pain have dwindled dismally to hasty high price punishments in Old Compton Street. And of course as one gathered from the whole Profumo affair, backed up by the sight of the clientele in these porn shops, the flag scene is pathetically middle aged with flatulent tycoons suffering themselves to be thrashed 'til the blood's drawn by unconcerned young bits who'll turn their hands to anything for a bit of cash. (Well that's *quite* enough of that, thank you very much!)

Beatles, of course, are still of the essence, more perhaps now, though in a special posthumous sort of way. They have passed on, not into obscurity or anything like that, but upward into a Top People's paradise where they are sometimes seen enjoying a quip with the Queen Mum or else chatting up the Duke at a luncheon. They have become a religion in fact. The days of their ministry on earth seems to be over—they don't seem to perform so much—and they have been taken up into heaven preferring to conserve the holy mystery of the Holy Quaternity in a delicious incommunicado. All over the place though there are icons, devotional photos and illuminated missals which keep the tiny earth-bound fans in touch with the provocatively absconded deities. There have been heresies of course. An antinomian group called the Rolling Stones who have a rough delinquent style have got a huge following and in fact all over London there is an air of expectant pop chiliasm with Wardous Street filled these ayems with purple hearted drinamyl droves coolly awaiting the resurrection of Charlemagne and the Franks.

The current War of the Roses is Mods versus Rockers. That's to

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say cool, chic kids versus the leather jacketed, rugged, one-time ton-up motor-bike boys. The Mods ride the more delicate, whimsical scooters which are rather jokily caparisoned in glittering accessories. Style is the thing here, insolent style, and the cheeky fart of the Vespa's exhaust is a calculated challenge to the Calibans on their BMW's. In the Mod world fashions come and go like the rainbow. "Faces" make the pace here, the chic contagion spreading through the community overnight from these unknown Typhoid Mary's of male fashion. In the old days, say five years ago, fashions changed at an understandable rate and propagated outwards from London in the expected way. There would even be lost valleys, often not very far from London where the trends had passed by leaving odd little shoals of coelocanth Teds still got up in Edwardian gear, snapping their fingers to Bill Haley and the Comets. Things have changed since then however. The social conductivity has shot up and trends flash about the place like St. Elmo's Fire. Also London has lost its exclusive lead and since the Mersey thing happened there have been signs of polycentrism—towns like Nottingham and Covenetry 'go' with an unexpected sting. Even Newcastle has its own nightclub, the Dolce Vita, and Liverpool has a low gear Second City called the Scaffold who do sketches and turns in the youth caves and have a horde of white stockinged fans who follow them like a horde of mini-bacchantes.

Many of the recording groups seem to have a few art students on the team. I am sure this is not entirely fortuitous. If crime was once the queer ladder for the recent American immigrant then the art school-pop group combination has become an upward escape route for our own internal immigrants—the disgrunted youngsters from the new frontiers of technical meritocracy in search of a Shangri-La where different rules apply. These are the bright young teen-agers who have flunked the usual courses of advance and promotion and backed tenderly away from Oxbridge, Redbrick and all the other certain certainties of the New Britain. Without wishing to give up on the whole thing, go 'beat' and so on, such kids find a good institutional compromise in the fertile, permissive uproar of a provincial art school. Here, more often than not, they'll take a course in commercial graphics and before very long start coming on with the styles and idioms which simultaneously nourish and feed *off* the world of advertising. The result is of course, that informal and easy going as these establishments may be, they actually *do* impose a strange sort of spiritual penalty—something like the curse of Midas. And a lot of art in the "pop" genre derives from the need to ironize this awkward symbiosis between art and commerce.

The enemy of course is taste, just philistinism in reverse which

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gobbles up the avant garde even as it is created. The old distances have collapsed and individual talent, far from being cut off, now has an open frontier across which the most intimate, immediate ideas are smuggled into the public domain before they have time to germinate in the privacy of the old fashioned rejection. As Mary McCarthy brilliantly indicated in one of her addresses at the Prix Formentor in Salzburg this year, art has become subordinate to taste, existing only in order to be conspicuously consumed and discussed. And not just conspicuously consumed but immediately. Art has become a branch of show-biz and not just in style but in content too. The gap between painting and performance has narrowed and the drama of the absurd has become a department of the painting of the ridiculous. Part of the enormous success of Rauschenberg here in London a few months ago was due not so much to conditioning by other paintings in the same style as by the acoustic pop-dada of the radio Goon show which also played tricks and jokes with replicas of reality. Even politics has been telescoped into this community and since the gigantic success of TW-3 parliament has become a script-writing subsidiary of BBC-TV. The line between "happenings" and simple occurrences has been rubbed out. England has become one vast happening covered by the popular press rather in the same way as Variety covers B'way and the Pix. In fact far from being the "queer ladder," conspicuous performance of almost any sort has become a bloody great staircase to the top.

And so it goes on. Must stop now. Hoping this finds you as it leaves me,

Jonathan Miller

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Harry Langdon. How it is possible for such a physically self-effacing, underprivileged looking fellow to be so immensely attractive on the stage is hard to explain. But one simply cannot take one's eyes off him. In *The Baptism,* Mead is delightfully inventive and funny as a homosexual in long red underwear camping-in in the church, prancing, wisecracking, kibbitzing, flirting, while all the spiritual doings are taking place. In *The General Returns From One Place to Another,* he was more varied, and even more captivating. Rather than a role, this part is more like a set of charades: the General saluting while his pants are falling down, the General courting an inane widow who keeps popping up along his route, the General making a political speech the General mowing down a field of flowers with his swagger stick, the General trying to crawl into a sleeping bag, the General dressing down his two adjutants, and so on. It was not, of course, what Mead did, but the way he did it. The source of his art is the deepest and purest of all: he just gives himself, wholly and without reserve, to some bizarre autistic fantasy. Nothing is more attractive in a person, but it is extremely rare after the age of four. This is the quality Harpo Marx has; Langdon and Keaton among the great silent comics have it; so do those four wonderful floppy Raggedy Andy dolls, the Beatles. Tammy Grimes projects something of it in a very stylized and exciting performance in an otherwise unremarkable Broadway musical now running, *High Spirits,* which is based on Noel Coward's "Blithe Spirit." (The marvellous Bea Lillie is in it, too; but either she doesn't have enough scope for her gifts in this play or she just isn't up to form.) Another person around who has this quality, although in this case in a very slight perishable form, is a Greenwich Village nightclub performer named Tiny Tim. He is a very tall young man with shoulder-length hair who sings Shirley Temple songs (in a rousing falsetto) and Nelson Eddy-Jeannette MacDonald favorites (both parts) while accompanying himself on a tiny plastic Woolworth guitar. Again, it is not what he does but the somnambulistic concentration with which he does it.

What all these performers have in common—from Buster Keaton to Taylor Mead—is their total lack of self consciousness, in the pursuit of some absolutely invented idea of action. With even a touch of self-consciousness, the effect is spoiled. It becomes insincere, distasteful, even grotesque. I am speaking of course of something rarer than acting ability. And since the ordinary conditions of work in the theatre promote a great deal of self-consciousness, one is at least as likely to find this kind of thing in informal circumstances, such as those in which *The General* and

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The Baptism were put on. I am not sure whether Taylor Mead's performances would have prospered in another setting.

My favorite theatrical event of recent months, though, did survive the jump from semi-amateur production to off-Broadway; at least it was still surviving the last time I saw it. *Home Movies* opened in March in the choir loft of the Judson Memorial Church off Washington Square and eventually moved to the Provincetown Playhouse. The scene is A Home. The characters are: a Margaret Dumont mother; a super-athletic mustachioed father; a shrivelled whiney virgin daughter; a girlish youth; a red-cheeked stuttering poet sporting a muffler; a pair of bouncy clericals named Father Shenanigan and Sister Thalia; and an affable Negro delivery man with a thick foot-long pencil. Certain gestures are made in the direction of a plot. The father is believed dead, mother and daughter are lamenting his absence, friends of the family and clergy are paying condolence calls, and in the middle of it all father is delivered, alike and kicking, in a wardrobe. But it doesn't matter. In *Home Movies* only the present exists—charming people coming and going, reclining in various tableaux, and singing at each other. There is a fast and witty script by Rosalyn Drexler, in which the oldest cliché and the fanciest fancy are meant to be uttered with the same solemnity. "It's the truth," says one character. "Yes," answers another, "a terrible truth like a rash." The gentleness and warmth of *Home Movies* delighted me even more than its wit; and this seemed to me the work of the adorable music composed by Al Carmines (who is assistant minister at the Judson Memorial Church) and played by him on the piano. My favorite numbers are the tango sung and danced by Sister Thalia (Sheindi Tokayer) and Father Shenanigan (Al Carmines), the winsome strip-tease done by Peter (Freddy Herko) and the duets between him and Mrs. Verdun (Gretel Cummings); and the song "Peanut Brittle" belted out by the maid Violet (Barbara Ann Teer). *Home Movies* is a lot of fun. And the people on the stage look happy to be doing what they are doing, too. One could hardly ask for more in the theatre—except for great plays, great actors, and great spectacles. Lacking these, one hopes for vitality and joy; and these seem more likely to turn up on out of the way stages, like the Judson Memorial Church or the Sierra Leone pavilion at the World's Fair, than in midtown or even off-Broadway theatres. It helps that neither *Home Movies,* nor *The General* and *The Baptism,* are, strictly, plays. They are theatrical events of a use-and-throw-away kind—spoofs, joyous and insouciant, full of irreverence for "the theatre" and "the play." Something similar is taking place with the movies: there is more vitality and art in the Maysles brothers' film on

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the Beatles in America, *What's Happening,* than in all American story-films made this year. You have to take life where you can find it.

Last, and I suppose least, a few words about two Shakespeare productions.

From John Gielgud's excellent essay, "The Hamlet Tradition—Some Notes on Costume, Scenery and Stage," published in 1937, one could educe most of the particular mistakes in Gielgud's present production of *Hamlet* in New York. For instance, Gielgud cautions against playing Act I, Scene 2—the scene in which Hamlet, Claudius, and Gertrude all appear for the first time—as a family quarrel, rather than a formal privy council meeting, the first (according to tradition) held after the accession of Claudius to the throne. Yet this is just what Gielgud has allowed in the New York production, with Claudius and Gertrude looking like a weary suburban couple having it out with a spoiled only son. Another instance: in staging the Ghost, Gielgud in his essay argues convincingly against increasing ghostliness by using a miked voice coming from offstage, rather than the voice of the actor who is on stage and being seen by the audience. Everything must work toward making the Ghost as real as possible. But in the present production, Gielgud has forfeited the entire physical presence of the Ghost. This time the Ghost is really ghostly: a taped voice, Gielgud's own, resonating hollowly through the theatre, and a giant silhouette thrown on the rear wall of the stage. . . . But it is a waste of time to look for reasons for this or that feature of the current production. The overall impression is of complete indifference, as if the play hadn't really been directed at all—except that one gathers that some of the dullness, at least the visual dullness, is actually deliberate. There is the matter of the clothes: most of the actors, whether courtiers or soldiers, wear old slacks and sweaters and windbreakers, though Hamlet's pants and shirt match (they're black), and Claudius and Polonius wear natty business suits, and Gertrude and Ophelia have long skirts (Gertrude has a mink, too), and the Player King and Queen have gorgeous costumes and gold masks. This silly conceit appears to be the one idea in the present production, and is called playing *Hamlet* in "rehearsal clothes."

The production affords exactly two pleasures. Hearing John Gielgud's voice on tape, even thus Cineramarized, reminded one of how beautiful Shakespeare's verse sounds when it is spoken with grace and intelligence. And the excellent George Rose, in the brief role of the gravedigger, rendered all the delights of Shakespeare's prose. The rest of the performances gave only various degrees of pain. Everyone spoke

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too fast; that fault apart, some performances rose to the height of mediocrity, while others, for example the performances of Laertes and Ophelia, deserve to be singled out as particularly immature, unfelt. It might be mentioned, though, that Eileen Herlie, who does a perfunctory Gertrude, gave a striking performance in the same role in Olivier's movie some fifteen years ago. And that Richard Burton, who does as little as possible with the part of Hamlet, is indeed a very handsome man. Correction: he does play the whole of Hamlet's death scene standing, when he could have sat down.

But no sooner had one recovered from Gielgud's effrontery in presenting a Shakespeare play absolutely nude, without any interpretation at all, then a Shakespeare production arrived which, putting the best face on it, was marred by over-interpretation and too much thought. This was Peter Brook's celebrated *King Lear* which was staged at Stratford-on-Avon two years ago, was received with great acclaim in Paris, throughout Eastern Europe, and in Russia, and played—more or less inaudibly—in the New York State Theatre (which, it's now discovered, was designed for music and ballet) at Lincoln Center. If Gielgud's *Hamlet* was without thought or style, Brook's *King Lear* came laden with ideas. One read that, inspired by a recent essay by Jan Kott, the Polish Shakespearean scholar, comparing Shakespeare and Beckett, Brook had decided to play *King Lear* as *End-Game,* so to speak. Gielgud has mentioned in an interview this April in England that Brook told him it was his controversial "Japanese" *King Lear* (sets and costumes by Noguchi) in 1955 which gave him the basic idea for the current production. And by consulting the "Lear Log" of Charles Marowitz, Brook's assistant at Stratford in 1962 one can find other influences, too. But in the end none of the ideas that fed into the production matter. What matters is what one saw and, hopefully, heard. What I saw was rather dull—if you liked it, it was austere—and arbitrary, too. I can't see what is gained by going against the emotional climaxes of the play—leveling off Lear's tirades, bringing the Gloucester plot almost to equal scale with the Lear plot, cutting out "humanist" passages such as where Regan's servants move to aid the newly blinded Gloucester and where Edmund attempts to revoke the execution of Cordelia and Lear ("Some good I mean to do, Despite of mine own nature"). There were a number of graceful and intelligent performances—Edmund, Gloucester, the Fool. But all the actors seemed to work under an almost palpable constraint, the desire simultaneously to make explicit and to underplay which must have been what led Brook, in one of the most curious choices of the production, to keep the stage fully lit and bare during the storm scenes. Paul Scofield's Lear is

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an admirally studied performance. On Lear's great age—with its egotism, its awkward movements and appetites—he is especially good. But I cannot see the point of his throwing so much of the role away, Lear's madness for instance, by arbitrary vocal mannerisms that deadened the full emotional power of his lines. The only performance which seemed to me to survive this strange, crippling interpretation which Brook has imposed on his actors—even, to thrive on it—was Irene Worth's complex and partly sympathetic Goneril. Miss Worth appeared to have searched every corner of her role, and unlike Scofield to have found more, rather than less, than others had before.

Susan Sontag

BROUGHT VERY CLOSE

Brought very close to death by one world war,
my grandfather chose to die just in time
to avoid being killed by the next one.
My grandmother, wise after the bombing
and seeing benefit in everything,
said, *Just as well, for he'd not have stood it.*
She did, and showed everyone the neat hole
burned through the old table in the outside
back area by a hissing whitehot
incendiary bomb, but told no one except
my father how she calmly saved her home.
In the same night the proud church opposite
became a gutted smoking shell of stone:
her old eyes laughed as she drew the moral.

B. S. Johnson

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MODERN DOCUMENTS

MEANS AND ENDS

Their Interdependence, and Leon Trotsky's Essay on "Their Morals and Ours"

The relation of means and ends has long been an outstanding issue in morals. It has also been a burning issue in political theory and practice. Of late the discussion has centered about the later developments of Marxism in the U.S.S.R. The course of the Stalinists has been defended by many of his adherents in other countries on the ground that the purges and prosecutions, perhaps even with a certain amount of falsification, were necessary to maintain the alleged socialistic regime of that country. Others have used the measures of the Stalinist bureaucracy to condemn the Marxist policy on the ground that the latter leads to such excesses as have occurred in the U.S.S.R. precisely because Marxism holds that the end justifies the means. Some of these critics have held that since Trotsky is also a Marxian he is committed to the same policy and consequently if he had been in power would also have felt bound to use any means whatever that seemed necessary to achieve the end involved in dictatorship by the proletariat.

The discussion has had at least one useful theoretical result. It has brought out into the open for the first time, as far as I am aware, an explicit discussion by a consistent Marxian of the relation of the means and ends in social action.* At the courteous invitation of one of the editors of this review, I propose to discuss this issue in the light of Mr. Trotsky's discussion of the interdependence of means and ends. Much of the earlier part of his essay does not, accordingly, enter into my discussion, though I may say that on the ground of *tu quoque* argument (suggested by the title) Trotsky has had no great difficulty in showing that some of his critics have acted in much the same way they attribute to him. Since Mr. Trotsky also indicates that the only alternative position

* EDITORS' NOTE: Mr. Dewey refers to Leon Trotsky's article in *The New International*, June 1938. Mr. Dewey's answer appeared in the August 1938 issue of *The New International*.

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to the idea that the end justifies the means is some form of absolutistic ethics based on the alleged deliverances of conscience, or a moral sense, or some brand of eternal truths, I wish to say that I write from a standpoint that rejects all such doctrines as definitely as does Mr. Trotsky himself, and that I hold that the end in the sense of consequences provides the only basis for moral ideas and action, and therefore provides the only justification that can be found for means employed.

The point I propose to consider is that brought up toward the end of Mr. Trotsky's discussion in the section headed "Dialectic Interdependence of Means and Ends." The following statement is basic: "A means can be justified only by its end. But the end in turn needs to be justified. From the Marxian point of view, which expresses the historic interests of the proletariat, the end is justified if it leads to increasing the power of man over nature and to the abolition of the power of man over man." (p. 172) This increase of the power of man over nature, accompanying the abolition of the power of man over man, seems accordingly to be *the* end—that is, an end which does not need itself to be justified but which is the justification of the ends that are in turn means to it. It may also be added that others than Marxians might accept this formulation of *the* end and hold that it expresses the moral interest of society—if not the historic interest—and not merely and exclusively that of the proletariat.

But for my present purpose, it is important to note that the word "*end*" is here used to cover two things—the final justifying end and ends that are themselves means to this final end. For while it is not said in so many words that some ends are but means, that proposition is certainly implied in the statement that some ends "*lead to* increasing the power of man over nature, *etc.*" Mr. Trotsky goes on to explain that the principle that the end justifies the means does not mean that every means is permissible. "That is permissible, we answer, which really leads to the liberation of mankind."

Were the latter statement consistently adhered to and followed through it would be consistent with the sound principle of interdependence of means and end. Being in accord with it, it would lead to scrupulous examination of the means that are used, to ascertain what their actual objective consequences will be as far as it is humanly possible to tell—to show that they do "really" lead to the liberation of mankind. It is at this point that the double significance of *end* becomes important. As far as it means consequences actually reached, it is clearly dependent upon means used, while measures in their capacity of means are dependent upon the end in the sense that they have to be

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viewed and judged on the ground of their actual objective results. On this basis, an *end-in-view* represents or is an *idea* of the final consequences, in case the idea is formed *on the ground of the means that are judged to be most likely to produce the end.* The end in view is thus itself a means for directing action—just as a man's *idea* of health to be attained or a house to be built is not identical with end in the sense of actual outcome but is a means for directing action to achieve that end.

Now what has given the maxim (and the practice it formulates) that the end justifies the means a bad name is that the end-in-view, the end professed and entertained (perhaps quite sincerely) justifies the use of certain means, and so justifies the latter that it is not necessary to examine what the actual consequences of the use of chosen means will be. An individual may hold, and quite sincerely as far as his personal opinion is concerned that certain means will "really" lead to a professed and desired end. But the real question is not one of personal belief but of the objective grounds upon which it is held: namely, the consequences that will actually be produced by them. So when Mr. Trotsky says that "dialectical materialism knows no dualism between means and end," the natural interpretation is that he will recommend the use of means that can be shown by their own nature to lead to the liberation of mankind as an objective consequence.

One would expect, then, that with the idea of the liberation of mankind as the end-in-view, there would be an examination of *all* means that are likely to attain this end without any fixed pre-conception as to what they *must* be, and that every suggested means would be weighed and judged on the express ground of the consequences it is likely to produce.

But this is *not* the course adopted in Mr. Trotsky's further discussion. He says: "The liberating morality of the proletariat is of a revolutionary character. . . . It *deduces* a rule of conduct from the laws of the development of society, thus primarily from the class struggle, the law of all laws." (Italics are mine.) As if to leave no doubt of his meaning he says: "The end flows from the historical movement"—that of the class struggle. The principle of interdependence of means and end has thus disappeared or at least been submerged. For the choice of means is not decided upon on the ground of an independent examination of measures and policies with respect to their actual objective consequences. On the contrary, means are *"deduced"* from an independent source, an alleged law of history which is *the* law of all laws of social development. Nor does the logic of the case change if the word "alleged" is stricken out. For even so, it follows that means to be used are not derived from consideration of the

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end, the liberation of mankind, but from another outside source. The professed end—the end-in-view—the liberation of mankind, is thus subordinated to the class struggle as the means by which it is to be attained. Instead of *inter*dependence of means and end, the end is dependent upon the means but the means are not derived from the end. Since the class struggle is regarded as the *only* means that will reach the end, and since the view that it is the only means is reached deductively and not by an inductive examination of the means-consequences in their interdependence, the means, the class struggle, does not need to be critically examined with respect to its actual objective consequences. It is automatically absolved from all need for critical examination. If we are not back in the position that the *end-in-view* (as distinct from objective consequences) justifies the use of any means in line with the class struggle and that it justifies the neglect of all other means, I fail to understand the logic of Mr. Trotsky's position.

The position that I have indicated as that of genuine interdependence of means and ends does not automatically rule out class struggle as one means for attaining the end. But it does rule out the deductive method of arriving at it as a means, to say nothing of its being the *only* means. The selection of class struggle as a means has to be justified, on the ground of the interdependence of means and end, by an examination of actual consequences of its use, not deductively. Historical considerations are certainly relevant to this examination. But the assumption of a *fixed law* of social development is not relevant. It is as if a biologist or a physician were to assert that a certain law of biology which he accepts is so related to the end of health that the means of arriving at health —and the only means—can be deduced from it, so that no further examination of biological phenomena is needed. The whole case is prejudged.

It is one thing to say that class struggle is a means of attaining the end of the liberation of mankind. It is a radically different thing to say that there is an absolute *law* of class struggle which determines the means to be used. For if it determines the means, it also determines the end—the actual consequences, and upon the principle of genuine interdependence of means and end it is arbitrary and subjective to say that that consequence will be the liberation of mankind. The liberation of mankind is the end to be striven for. In any legitimate sense of "moral," it is a moral end. No scientific law can determine a moral end save by deserting the principle of interdependence of means and end. A Marxian may sincerely believe that class struggle is *the* law of social development. But quite aside from the fact that the belief closes the doors to further

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examination of history—just as an assertion that the Newtonian laws are the final laws of physics would preclude further search for physical laws—it would not follow, even if it were *the* scientific law of history, that it is the means to the moral goal of the liberation of mankind. That it is such a means has to be shown not by "deduction" from a law but by examination of the actual relations of means and consequences; an examination in which given the liberation of mankind as end, there is free and unprejudiced search for the means by which it can be attained.

One more consideration may be added about class struggle as a means. There are presumably several, perhaps many, different ways by means of which the class struggle may be carried on. How can a choice be made among these different ways except by examining their consequences in relation to the goal of liberation of mankind? The belief that a law of history determines the particular way in which the struggle is to be carried on certainly seems to tend toward a fanatical and even mystical devotion to use of certain ways of conducting the class struggle to the exclusion of all other ways of conducting it. I have no wish to go outside the theoretical question of the interdependence of means and ends but it is conceivable that the course actually taken by the revolution in the U.S.S.R. becomes more explicable when it is noted that means were deduced from a supposed scientific law instead of being searched for and adopted on the ground of their relation to the moral end of the liberation of mankind.

The only conclusion I am able to reach is that in avoiding one kind of absolutism Mr. Trotsky has plunged into another kind of absolutism. There appears to be a curious transfer among orthodox Marxists of allegiance from the ideals of socialism and scientific *methods* of attaining them (scientific in the sense of being based on the objective relations of means and consequences) to the class struggle as the law of historical change. Deduction of ends set up, of means and attitudes, from this law as the primary thing makes all moral questions, that is, all questions of the end to be finally attained, meaningless. To be scientific about ends does not mean to read them out of laws, whether the laws are natural or social. Orthodox Marxism shares with orthodox religionism and with traditional idealism the belief that human ends are interwoven into the very texture and structure of existence—a conception inherited presumably from its Hegelian origin.

John Dewey

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CHOPIN

It is easy to be a realist in painting, a visual art turned toward the external world. But what does realism [mean] in music? Nowhere are conventionality and ambiguity so much condoned as here, no single area of creativity is so clouded with the aura of romanticism, that doctrine of arbitrariness which is always successful because nothing can prove or disprove it. And yet even here, everything is derived from exceptions. They are numerous, and they constitute the history of music. There are, however, exceptions even among exceptions. They are two—Bach and Chopin.

These central pillars, these founders of instrumental music do not seem to us heroes of invention, figures of fantasy. They are personified truths, dressed in their own clothes. Their music abounds in details and produces the impression of a chronicle of their lives. With them more than with anyone else, reality comes into view through sound.

In speaking about realism in music, we definitely do not have in mind the illustrative principle of operatic or program music. We mean something completely different.

In any art whatsoever, realism is not a separate development, but consists of a distinct level of art, a supreme degree of exactness on the part of the artist. Realism is, we would imagine, that decisive measure of creative detailing which is required of the artist neither by general esthetic principles nor by his contemporary audience. It is precisely with the demands of these that the art of romanticism is always content, at this point that it stops . . . How little is needed for it to flourish! A stilted pathos, a false profundity and affected sentiment—all the forms of artificiality are at its command.

The realistic artist is in a completely different situation. His method is a cross, a predestination. No shadow of caprice; not the slightest whim. How can he play, when his own future plays with him, when he is its plaything?

To begin with. What makes a man a realist? What forms him? An early impressionability in childhood—it would seem to us—and a timely conscientiousness in maturity. It is precisely these two forces which confront him with a kind of work that the romantic artist neither knows nor needs. It is precisely his remembered experiences that drive such a man to make the technical discoveries necessary to reproduce them. Artis-

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tic realism, as we see it, is a depth of biographical impression acting as the main impulse in the artist's life, pushing him into innovation and originality.

Chopin is a realist in the same sense as Leo Tolstoy. His work is thoroughly original not because it is dissimilar from that of his rivals, but because it is similar to nature, the model after which he wrote. It is always biographical, not because of egocentricity, but because like other great realists Chopin looked on his life as a means of knowing every kind of life on earth, and that is precisely the way he lived—an extravagantly personal and wastefully solitary kind of existence.

II

The chief means of expression, the language in which is set forth everything that Chopin wanted to say, is his melody, the most genuine and most powerful of any we know. This is no short melodic motif, continually returning in couplets, nor the repetition of an operatic aria, endless vocal reiterations of the same thing: this is a steadily developing thought, like the plot of an absorbing story or the contents of an historically important document. It is powerful not only in the sense of its action on us. It is powerful also in another sense: that Chopin experienced the nature of its despotism himself, and was conscious while harmonizing and polishing it of all the refinement and intricacy of such a demanding and captivating discipline.

For example, the theme of the E Major Étude (No. 3, Op. 10) might have won for its author the fame of the best Schumann song cycles, even with a more ordinary and restrained resolution. But no; for Chopin this melody was a representative of reality; beyond it stood some sort of real image or event. Once, when his favorite pupil played this piece, Chopin raised clenched hands with the cry: "O, my country!" And so, while non-harmonic tones and modulations were increased to a point of exhaustion, the seconds and thirds of the middle voice had to sound down to the last semi-tone, in order to remain faithful to all the undulations and ripples of this inundating theme, of this proto-melody—in order not to deviate from the truth.

Or, in the G Sharp Minor Étude (No. 6, Op. 25), "In Thirds," the "Winter Journey" (this theme is more often assigned to the C Major Étude (No. 7, Op. 10), the mood, similar in kind to the elegaic moods of Schubert, might have been attained with less effort. But no; not only was there the rocking of a sleigh over ruts to be expressed, but flurries of white flakes continually erased, with slanting strokes, the arrow of road; the heavy black horizon cut across at another angle; and only

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such disappearing chromatic glimmering, such a numbing jangle, such a fading minor, could convey this intricate design of parting and separation.

Or in the Barcarolle (Op. 60), an impression similar to the "Song of the Venetian Gondolier" of Mendelssohn (No. 5, Op. 57) might have been achieved with more modest means, and then we would have just that poetic approximateness which is usually associated with such titles. But no; the lights of the embankment widen and scatter like oil-stains in the curving black water; waves, faces, voices and boats clash with each other; and in order to fix the imprint of all this, the Barcarolle itself, all of it, as it is, with its arpeggios, trills and grace-notes, had, like the entire lagoon, to rise and to fall and to soar upwards and to tumble down onto its pedal point, sonorously inundated by the major and minor shudderings of its harmonic element.

Always before the eyes of the soul (and this is precisely what hearing is) there is some kind of model which we must approach, listening attentively to it, extending ourselves in it, and benefiting from it. And so there is a sound of raindrops in the D Major Prelude (No. 5, Op. 28), and so a squadron of cavalry charges from the platform at the listener in the A Major Polonaise (Op. 40), and so waterfalls rush along a mountain road in the last part of the B Minor Sonata (Op. 58), and so a window in a country house bursts unexpectedly open during a storm at night in the middle of the quiet and serene F Major Nocturne (No. 1, Op. 15).

III

Chopin traveled, gave concerts, lived half of his life in Paris. Many people knew him. There are reminiscences about him by such eminent figures as Heinrich Heine, Schumann, George Sand, Delacroix, Liszt and Berlioz. In these remarks there is much of value, but even more talk of mermaids, aeolian harps and love-sick peris, which is intended to give us a picture of the compositions of Chopin, of the style of his playing, his appearance and character. How wrongfully and absurdly at times mankind expresses its enthusiasms! The last things to be found in this man were water-nymphs and salamanders; on the contrary, all about him in the salons of elegant society fluttered an intricate swarm of romantic moths and elves; getting up from the piano, he would pass through their receding ranks, phenomenonally distinct, genial, politely ironical, and tired to death from nights spent composing and days full of lessons with pupils. They say that often after such evenings, to shake off the weariness that these improvisations caused in him,

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Chopin would slip unnoticed into the hall to some mirror, disarrange his tie and hair and return transformed to the salon to begin acting out humorous impersonations of his own devising: a famous English traveler, a gushing Parisienne, a poor old Jew. Clearly a great tragic gift is unthinkable without feelings of objectivity, and a feeling of objectivity is not found without mimetic ability.

It is remarkable that wherever Chopin leads us and whatever he shows us, we always give ourselves up to his imaginings without straining our sense of appropriateness, without intellectual awkwardness. All his storms and dramas closely concern us, they easily take place in an age of railroads and the telegraph. Even when a legendary world intrudes, in the Fantasie, the Ballades and parts of the Polonaises—in terms of subject partly connected with Mickiewicz and Slowacki—even here the threads of some kind of plausibility reach out to contemporary man. Especially deep is the impress of this seriousness in the most Chopinesque of Chopin—in his Études.

The Études of Chopin, intended as technical manuals, are rather whole disciplines than textbooks. They are musical researches into a theory of childhood; separate chapters, for the piano, of an introduction to death (it is staggering to think that half of them were written by a man of twenty), and they rather teach history, the *structure* of the universe, or whatsoever more remote and more general, than how to play the piano. The significance of Chopin is wider than music. His work seems to us a second invention of that art.

Boris Pasternak

(*Translated by Paul Schmidt*)

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ARGUMENTS

BALDWIN'S BURDEN

Less and less today are the lives of *individuals* developed and explored by novelists. Many writers might be called "literary" social scientists, spending their major energies on descriptions of social struggle, cultural change, or clinical psychopathology. Their novels reflect this kind of categorical thinking as much as their essays. Characters are not explored with a compassionate eye for how extraordinarily complex—marvelously so, terrifyingly so—human beings are. Characters tend to be merely illustrative of the emerging Jewish middle class in America, of the Negro struggle for survival, of the problem of identity in college students, the nature of the unconscious in children or adults. Character portrayal by way of *appreciating* the particular has given way to the meticulous study and representation of various groups and "problems."

Ironically (should I say unselfishly?) even the individual author's private life, let alone his characters', submits to this new and imperative fashion. James Baldwin, for instance, isn't satisfied with a letter from a region in his mind. He can't be satisfied simply with relating a critical time in his early manhood to the tragedies of our country. He is impelled to expand his feelings, make them into the feelings of all Negroes, make his struggle theirs, his conclusions their demands, his frustrations their accusation, his anger their treat. He is determined to offer a general truth out of the sphere of his own life, and has a grandiose remedy for our social ills. For Baldwin—a sharp critic of America's vulgar piety—it is love, love, love.

Baldwin translates his own adolescent agony into the hate in all Negroes for whites and then predicts the white man's inevitable doom unless he learns a radically new way of getting along with the Negro. In this painful, alternately hopeless and hopeful trek, with its mingled overtones of augury and fierce accusation, we pass through one man's encounter with a fearful and senselessly oppressive world to his final

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recognition: power is the heart of the problem of the races, the Negroes have suffered from the lack of it, the whites have it, but not for long, and it is power alone that Negroes want from their persecutors. He does not specify how history or political action will reverse the present power balance, though his confidence is high that a reversal is at hand. Baldwin's sense of history is old-fashioned. He talks of America as if it were Rome, as if our internal corruptions will slowly cause our defeat, our loss of world power. But the relationship between corruption and power in a nuclear age is not so direct. It is not, after all, the issue of power on the wane but of the uses of incredibly multiplied power which must concern us.

I would imagine that what Baldwin means is that the Negro himself would like all that power, the implication being that he would exercise it more sanely and justly. He is not very much interested in tying such implications to the constant paradoxes in man's nature or condition—victims hate themselves too; hate blinds as well as illuminates; suffering can both stunt and inspire; power corrupts as well as enlivens. These paradoxes make generalizations about human nature a risky business. Baldwin, however, is not afraid of the risks: he tells us not only that all Negroes hate whites, but also that they know them better than whites know themselves. More than that, Baldwin's white man suffers, burdened by a corrupted Christianity and a falling West, while the blacks, from suffering which Baldwin strikingly illustrates, emerge with the strength that allows Negro children to face mobs.

Approaching these little Negro children who walked past fearful, foul-mouthed crowds before two schools in New Orleans, Baldwin describes himself as apprehensive. In his fear of sentimentality he resorts to a kind of dogmatic firmness of statement that is merely another form of sentimentality: "Life here so briefly and inadequately sketched has been the experience of generations of Negroes, and it helps explain how they have been able to produce children of kindergarten age who can walk through mobs to get to school. . . The Negro boys and girls who are facing mobs today come out of a long line of improbable aristocrats, the *only* genuine aristocrats this country has produced." (The italics are mine.)

Baldwin was right in being apprehensive about describing those children who attended two elementary schools in the fall of 1960 and the ugly spring of 1961. They do not require unearned emotion from us, not even the kind of extravagance that emerges from Baldwin's description of them. Who are these children—these so-called "aristocrats"? Precisely what happened to them, and why? During the worst

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of it they were a handful, four little Negro girls and about six white boys and girls. The streetwalkers, mouthing threats and acting out some of them, wanted a boycott by a united white population. A Negro mother's words on one of my tapes will be sufficient to describe what happened: "We had it bad all right, but those white kids got it worse than us because they were after them more than us."

These aristocratic children were white and Negro alike, and that they managed so well is a mystery that has nothing to do with color. During the second World War Anna Freud noticed that under severe bombings, even with separation from or loss of parents, children survived quite handily, given certain conditions. These conditions were not always very apparent but they were very real and important to the child. The National Academy of Sciences in Washington has published studies of children in a vivid assortment of disasters or crises such as tornadoes, floods and fires. All these investigations reveal that successful survival (there are, sadly, other kinds) may be discriminatingly indiscriminate, oftentimes ignoring social, cultural, or economic categories—and racial ones, too—in order to draw upon certain nuances of family life, of an internal, private, seemingly trivial nature. These psychological factors, here so significant, may, of course, be largely irrelevant in other crises of survival (in concentration camps for instance) demanding physical strength or what might be most properly called "ethical" strength.

Is it heartless to deny the special claims to aristocracy of these Negro girls in New Orleans? On the contrary, such claims are more likely to be unfair to them, to be a way actually of segregating them. We can be proud of them without turning them into martyrs. A martyr "wins" by losing. These girls have not lost. Others have—millions of Negroes over several centuries of time. Baldwin's case is strongest when he emphasizes how many people—they include in my experience Negroes as well as whites—still refuse even to recognize the conditions which he exposes. Moral decadence, a devious network of rationalizations and denials, obscure the blunt horror of what it means for one race to brutalize another.

If these Negro children and others like them throughout the South are not to be stripped of their humanity the highest honor we can grant them is the truth of their lives. Anger for past hurts is inevitable, nor can we completely avoid fresh outbursts of fury caused by new sins inflaming past sins. We can, however, try to spare these children by giving them this measure of freedom—to be themselves: not the white man's nigger nor the Negro's whiplash. And if Baldwin's whites need to be

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flogged, as a race, for their historical crimes, whether by Negroes or at their own behest, when will racism stop?

"Man, worse than the cops in Mississippi is finding what's happened to us after all these years. They've made those people so scared, and they keep them so scared that I get more discouraged with my own people than the local whites." For me it might just have been an interview, but for him, a young Negro college student, a freedom rider, a veteran of an appalling number of arrests after countless sit-ins, these were the hard facts of life: that large numbers of Negroes in the South, as a result of the very plundered bondage and daily terror described by Baldwin, are dispirited, worn people, and, from a doctor's viewpoint, very often sick; sick with vitamin deficiencies and their sequelae; sick with a high incidence of venereal disease, hypertension, alcoholism, paranoid schizophrenia, tuberculosis, undiagnosed or wrongly treated fungal diseases, parasitic diseases, bacterial diseases—diseases of the poor, the ignorant, of the wayward and backward. Failing to register to vote in cities and towns is for many of them less a considered policy than merely a consequence of their being deadened, apathetic, almost silly and senseless, so far have fear and hunger and misery overtaken them and generations before them. "They've been killed, that's what," to quote my student friend again. Not fear always, certainly not everywhere, and fear that is often reversed by glimmers of hope and of new possibilities. But hope comes rarely to these grim settlements of shanties with littered yards along frowzy, unpaved streets, the inhabitants barely literate, really illiterate, with ragged, unsightly, outlandish clothes and ill made, tasteless furniture. The people in these settlements can be among Baldwin's aristocrats only if suffering is his criterion, but for most of those I know life is instead an endless matter of merely automatic or sometimes wanton twitches and exertions.

Nor is this the end of the chronicle of disaster which in one way or another the entire nation, *all* its people, must overcome. The problem is not merely that of crushed and forlorn people in rural or urban slums eating fatback, though this is a millstone enough. The cumulative ravages of oppression affect even the apparently comfortable, if numerically skimpy, Negro middle class, persisting in the psychological structure of many Negroes of all classes and regions. It is true the young child can survive a mob for reasons that have nothing to do with race or ideology. However, his older, more self-conscious racial brothers, facing similar threats, are ironically susceptible to maneuvers of the mind by which the oppressed, in their self-contempt, look at themselves just as their oppressors do.

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I am thinking, in this connection, of a young man, tall, quite thin, with straplike muscles and a supple body. His mother approached me one day over a year ago with a confidence. She was a poor woman from a sharecropper farm in South Carolina, and her son had recently led his race into a white high school of the deep South. The situation was still a little incredible to her: the ugly, incessant telephone calls that went on for three months before the start of desegregation, the police visits and the police escort for her son when the opening day arrived, the press, the television, and her son's stories, over the following weeks, of harsh words and quiet, puzzled faces from silent white adolescents who didn't know what to think or say or do. Like him, they were confused, because what they had learned when they were younger was in conflict with what they were experiencing. Yet most of them were determined to study, just as he was determined to stay with them and study. It was this common, very simple determination, rather than any ideological enlightenment that carried them together through the year. The youth was in a school where he met much less scorn than others had met in his city or in other cities. Now well past his initiation, her son had gone to a football game between two Negro high schools, one of them formerly his, and had seen a razor pulled, a fight develop, a person hurt. "Mother, they're animals," he said, "they're animals, and you know it when you go to a white school and see how civilized people behave." She was a heavy woman who never could resist starches, and she finished the last of a doughnut and told me: "If that's integration, for my boy to talk like that, I want to go back to our farm."

I had seen worse than this. In a Southern college recently desegregated, social and economic distinctions and snobberies that apparently exist as much within as between races, appeared among the three Negroes pioneering desegregation. In the midst of the agony of public outcry, of heckling and jeering shared by all three, one poor Negro was "cut" by the others, finding himself slighted by his two Negro classmates.

I recall all the mixed motives, all the ambivalence of the white and Negro parents alike in New Orleans, and all the usual range of hesitation and suspicion, trust and kindness I saw among the Negro students in Atlanta and elsewhere. Do these people need to be sanctified by converting them into aristocrats? Under stress, I have not heard too many claims from them to special worth or insight. On the contrary, they are anxious to be quite realistic about themselves, even willing to say as one did to me, "I get a kick out of the people who make a big thing out of what we do. . . . I know it's important, but I'm getting a lot out of it too, and I'm not so pure as some of those speeches say. . . ." (He

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was a very shrewd young man indeed, bright and forthright, nobody's coward.)

To solve our national problem of racial tensions we must think clearly and plan soundly because we are in a delicate moment, when the anger of many Negroes is naked and the sorrows and guilts of whites more exposed. For Mr. Baldwin, regardless of *what* we say or try to do, Western civilization seems suspect and faltering. He allows the Negro scant susceptibility to the many problems which afflict whites—of identity, of religion, of survival, of intimacy and sexuality. The Negro is an outcast, plundered so long that his fate becomes an almost total historical judgment upon the white, Western world, a world which, according to Mr. Baldwin, knows very little about itself, because as he points out, it cannot understand the Negro. Yet, apparently the Negro can understand the white man, and can save him from his impending doom. The Negro, having given love to inadequate whites, is the crucial factor in finally enabling the white man to solve his problems of identity. There is a cynical medical and psychiatric core in me which must reject such an argument. The problems of "identity" and sexuality are simply too complicated for rhetoric of Baldwin's kind.

In short, Mr. Baldwin may have cornered himself into a dilemma not unprecedented. He tends strongly at times toward portraying the Negro as a kind of "natural man," an outsider, persecuted and untainted by the white market place. He alone, or perhaps with the gallant help of Mr. Norman Mailer's "white Negro," can save us from its commercial toxins. But it is for this same "natural man" that Mr. Baldwin wants civil rights. We are told he went to Oxford, Mississippi, at Robert Kennedy's urging to persuade James Meredith to stay in the very kind of situation which he has deplored as a mockery. If the Negro joins the American dream, will he not also suffer its nightmares?

This dilemma—of demanding acceptance by a country simultaneously denounced as almost worthless—is more of Baldwin's fancy than fact, a result of romanticized notions which in themselves are part of the problem of racial unreason as it plagues the educated and the gifted. We hear sweeping, categorical and conflicting generalizations, based upon partial visions or deliberately unqualified ones. Then we are given further generalizations, now remedial ones, in hasty conclusion: love is the answer, though hate is everywhere, and power the only real objective in a barely acknowledged war. After such talk where are we, who are we, and in heaven's name, what do we do?

We might begin by remembering how difficult it is even for people who know one another well to love and trust one another. Understanding,

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as defined and required by Baldwin, is at such a rare premium anywhere that we must ask where he locates it positively in the areas of life that concern him. It isn't necessary to defend psychoanalytic observations on child development, or the observations of generations of artists, to say that hates and loves, variable and unique, mixtures of both, are in all of us. We all struggle to achieve that elusive "identity" which often defies the most dedicated descriptions. Yes, love is the remedy, but how cheaply and above all, how easily, some prescribe it these days. And Mr. Baldwin, who has exposed the tawdry in us and helped, more than most, to make us question our facile slogans, should know this.

And so, we have come, at long last perhaps, to the rather self-evident truth that the problems of racism, white, black, or any kind, are not fairly treated in this injunctive or sentimental fashion. Indeed one of the chief lessons we can learn is how enticing some of the irrational snares of racist polemic can become. As I was debating in my mind whether I would sit down to write, in some clarification for myself, just what Mr. Baldwin said, and meant to say, I came upon the following comments from my senior senator, Mr. Russell of Georgia, expressing his reaction to a rather modest civil rights legislative program sent to the Congress by the late President Kennedy: "People of good will can

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agree on most of the President's objectives. The trouble with the government's undertaking to solve by force some of the problems suggested arises from the collision of politically established rights of one citizen with the rights which have always been claimed by other citizens. . . ." In view of this honest, "realistic" appraisal of power politics, I wondered what need there was for a writer like Baldwin to engage in more eloquent reaffirmations of the same message.

Yes, the lot of the Negro is tied with power, and so, in one sense, who can disagree with Baldwin? By his ability to convey his feelings, Baldwin has contributed to public discussion and information (I suspect Baldwin touched on the guilt of many, to judge by his critics). And, finally, it must be obvious that the very appearance of this kind of article indicates that we are moving into that important time when the Negro and white people of this country are not simply politically or economically more nearly equal or "free," but socially, personally, humanly face to face.

A Negro youth in Birmingham who had read Baldwin had this to say to me: "Baldwin jumps all over the white man, and sometimes I feel like doing nothing else. . . . But you can't win if you're white. I mean no matter what you try to do, you're wrong. . . . If I felt like Baldwin, I wouldn't try another sit-in. I'd be too depressed . . . if I were white I'd get annoyed with him after a while, because he goes overboard . . . you know, talks like a seggie in reverse. . . ."

At times Mr. Baldwin comes very close to this man and his world. He also leaves him far behind to enter other territories, to engage in angry exhortation or theoretical speculation. The sad fact is that our country needs to know this youth better—and others, white and black, like him. It needs to know itself.

Robert Coles

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Dwight Macdonald
Norman Mailer

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POLISH INTELLECTUALS

"Poem for Adults," which became famous in October 1956, one of Poland's leading poets, Antoni Slonimski.

It seems regrettable, at a time when the prospects of peaceful coexistence between East and West have appeared to be improving, that the Polish Government should have chosen to act in this manner. The events of October 1956 raised great hopes, in this country and elsewhere, of far-reaching liberalization in the cultural and intellectual field, and the high quality of recent Polish achievements in film, theater, and literature has attracted our admiration.

Is it too much to hope that the Polish Government may now see its way not only to lift the present ban but to grant the surely moderate demands of the Polish intellectuals for an increased measure of freedom of expression in the Poland of 1964?"

Steven Marcus
Arthur Miller
Robert Motherwell
William Phillips
Norman Podhoretz
Richard Poirier
David Reisman
Harold Rosenberg
Meyer Schapiro
Richard Schlatter
Susan Sontag
William Styron
Diana Trilling
Lionel Trilling
Gore Vidal
Robert Penn Warren

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BOOKS

A GENERATION OF ISSUES

DOINGS AND UNDOINGS: THE FIFTIES AND AFTER IN AMERICAN WRITING. By Norman Podhoretz. Farrar, Straus and Company. $4.95.

"Almost always it was the issues rather than the book itself that I really cared about." This admission, like a certain number of others in *Doings and Undoings* (see especially "Book Reviewing and Everyone I Know" or "Jewish Culture and the Intellectuals") shows off the flashy side of a mind that is otherwise critically penetrating not only about books and events but even more about Norman Podhoretz. That side of him seized on by his critics (and to me the least significant) which is given to rather blithe self-advertisements helps explain why Podhoretz has himself become an "issue," as does the kind of remark, which did not amuse several people *I* know, in "A Dissent on Updike": "when his first novel, *The Poorhouse Fair,* came out in 1958, I remember arguing about it at great length with Mary McCarthy and concluding after an hour or so of earnest give and take that one of us must be crazy." One hears in this the tones of a young man who has expected others to be perhaps a little too happy with his early eminence and to accept chic literary society not so much as a fringe benefit for having something to say but as nearly the prerequisite. Given such lapses, it isn't surprising that the reviewer in *The New York Review of Books* should have made an "issue" of Podhoretz by saying that he shows many of the characteristics of "Manhattan's literary man-of-all-work," and that his work is debilitated by his "sense of membership" in a New York cotorie. It isn't surprising either that the review, in trying to make the charge stick, should become discomfited and incoherent. The book itself and Podhoretz simply won't be cramped within any such "issue."

Nor should it be surprising that *The Nation*'s reviewer called Podhoretz a specie of has-been, resorting to the argument-by-generations of which Podhoretz has himself, at thirty-four, become the old master. Podhoretz, it is alleged, has nothing to say to "the new breed of younger

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intellectuals." There is apparently to be a "new breed of intellectuals" corresponding almost to each graduating class, a new barricade thrown up every year or so catching the heels of the aging youths on the far side and transforming them into the middle-aged.

Podhoretz's own preoccupation with distinguishing himself and his contemporaries from, say, the contemporaries of Lionel Trilling, reveals by its very insistence not a strong sense of the characteristics of a new generation so much as a frightened suspicion that it has no characteristics at all, that maybe it can't have any. The ways in which this phenomenon is analyzed—that, for example, we live in a time "when the only conventions in existence are anachronistic survivals of a moribund ethos"—seem to me, in their use of Big Think vocabulary, less an explanation than a cause of our concern for generations. Many people in their thirties are absurdly analytical of what they and their juniors are up to, pathetically anxious to be "in on it," less, I think, because of anything truly revealing in the various changes of fashions and fads than because of the sociological and psychoanalytical conditioning that prompts us to squeeze a generalization out of every sign of life, to look at every event or book as interesting not in itself but only as part of an "issue." So is it any wonder that no one has achieved in the 'fifties or 'sixties the intellectual and emotional poise that allowed Edmund Wilson to give to Podhoretz and others "the kind of guidance it was once his particular glory to give"? Podhoretz's brilliant and fastidiously admiring portrait of Wilson is of a man who could confront within the political and literary life of the 'twenties and 'thirties confirmations that his own inward tensions were historically consequent. Wilson's conviction that "all forms of human expression on all levels of literacy exist in a tangible continuum" gave him the further advantage of letting him deal with his personal, even idiosyncratic tastes in classical literature, music, dance, and painting as if these could be of as much general contemporary and ideological interest as were, say, the writings of Eliot or Marx.

By contrast, Podhoretz feels so beset by the incoherence within our culture that instead of writing history he finds himself composing what can only be called bulletins. Thus, in 1958, he reports rather breathlessly that "five, or even three years ago the Beat Generation would not have been noticed." He ascribes the reception they received to "the hunger that has grown up on all sides for something extreme, fervent, affirmative, and sweeping." This isn't a very adequate explanation in view of their being no evidence other than the Beats themselves (helped by a lot of free publicity in the Luce publications) of any such hunger, nothing— so little was there hunger "on all sides"—in politics,

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television or the movies; nothing in religion, unless, at wits end, one counts Billy Graham. I am interested not in arguing about a small group who have been called the "Beat Generation," however, but in illustrating Podhoretz's anxious effort to make "issues" out of fragments, to find order of some sort in the disarray which distinguishes cultural life now from that in which Wilson was able to be a guide. His predilection for "issues" that can be associated with a book or an event is a genuinely urgent and honorable search for possible connections among items that otherwise contribute, in their proliferation, to a kind of disengaged hopelessness that seems to lurk in Podhoretz's bravado. Podhoretz obviously wishes there *were* a New York group defined by ideological commitments rather than by a common vocabulary in which to talk about the lack of commitments; he wishes there *were* something so alive and characteristic of himself and his contemporaries that those younger could respond to it as a generation, even negatively. Who could wish otherwise or deny him the functioning power that comes from even the illusion that such things do significantly exist?

Doings and Undoings is not, then, merely a collection of essays displaying—as indeed they do—the versatility and acumen of its author. It should be read more appropriately as a one-man effort literally to create a generation to which he can then belong and to define the subjects this generation should care about. Podhoretz is the only one of his contemporaries who has made a significant attempt to do this. Many intellectuals of his age are not persuaded that what is going on around them can relevantly be discussed in terms of generations; still others find it intellectually distasteful to transform events or books into those "issues" by which Podhoretz links them to other books, trends, and happenings. The terms by which Podhoretz argues are to many of his contemporaries not at all necessary ones, and what he considers issues of general importance, like "liberal revisionism," are thought to be applicable only to the relatively special groups in which Podhoretz's ideas have been formed. Consistent with this objection, which is that there is a damaging provinciality in Podhoretz's formulations, would be the complaint that while his book claims to be intensely concerned with the current state of our culture it has nothing to say about music or the dance or painting or architecture and little about the literature of the past. And it seems as if these things are ignored only because none of them, though they figure importantly in the lives of scholarly intellectuals and academics, offer themselves for translation into sociological and political issues.

One cannot make such criticisms of Podhoretz, however, without

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feeling that they are in important respects irrelevant and unfair. He is, for one thing, an exceptionally knowledgeable man in the learned and artistic areas he seldom chooses to discuss in his writing, and, for another, his education at Columbia, the Seminary College of Jewish Studies, and Cambridge University was a schooling in precisely the kinds of intensive analysis of texts and documents which he finds still useful but merely prepatory to the larger arguments he wants to make. I know of few books in which the author is less satisfied merely with exercising the talents he has mastered or in which there is a more anxious attempt to escape the limitations of response that he thinks can result from such exercise. In declarations of independence from Lionel Trilling and F. R. Leavis, in efforts to separate himself from "liberal revisionism"—the celebration, in a revulsion from Stalinism, of the values of the American middle-class spirit—in his farewell to Edmund Wilson, and in his critical, but beautifully detailed reminiscenses of his childhood and youth, especially in "My Negro Problem—and Ours"—Podhoretz is in all these nostalgic repudiations and reassessments refusing to settle for the range of choices with which his life seems ready to surround him. He is trying to do what he praises Paul Goodman for doing and criticises Dwight Macdonald for failing to do: he wants, in discussing a book or a problem, to move outside the terms in which they present themselves, and he wants to imagine alternatives other than those enclosed in any given subject, whether it be race or *Catch 22*. He therefore rejects any so-called New Critical reading of politics or literature. It is both consistent and admirable that he should end the book referring, in a phrase William James would have admired, to "the man I now have a duty to be."

No one who reads this book with an eye to the conflicts going on in it can help but admire the portrait it offers of Podhoretz. He emerges less as a pontificator or a categorizer than as a man struggling to define some representative significance for himself, even as he argues against many of the convenient definitions and habits with which his experience and his associations have endowed him. One evidence of struggle is in the disparity between his detailed and personally involved scrutiny of a problem, such as the white man's hatred of the Negro, and a concluding solution to it, namely miscegenation, the more impertinent and abstract by virtue of the self-lacerating honesty with which he locates the problem within his own personal history. And in the literary essays—those on Mailer, Heller, and Bellow are exceptionally acute—there is the same effort, usually more successful than in the political or sociological pieces,

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to connect detailed judgments of performance with the "issues" he discovers in a book.

To see in these essays the agitation beneath the assurance is to understand why Podhoretz admires in contemporary literature some indication of an equivalent degree of struggle within any book he is reading. When he praises Lippman it is in part because Lippman's images generate "a rich rhetorical drama," and when he tries to summarize what attracts him to Mailer he uses the phrase "embattled vision." And he uses it with brilliantly clarifying effect, going on to show, in tones of severely qualified sympathy, how Mailer discovers in the act of writing "what he did not know he knew," the discoveries resulting from the resistance of the novelist in Mailer to the theoretician. Understandably, these essays are most critical of writers, like Updike, whose works do not reveal a pressure of something that wants, at the expense of form or style, to be brought to consciousness. This standard can take us back, of course, to the most compelling aspects of Melville, of Mark Twain in that disrupted and "embattled" novel *Huckleberry Finn,* and, though few care to discover this, to the essays of Emerson. Never concerning himself with these derivations, Podhoretz can without embarrassment impose such a standard, applicable to literature only of the noblest ambition, on contemporary works that ought to be treated much more lightly, unless, of course, one chooses to consider them a kind of symptom. When the criteria derived from his admiration for an "embattled vision" are combined with his insistence that writers should concern themselves with the "issues" of our time—as he defines them—Podhoretz's criticism can become nearly presumptuous. Thus he can suggest that the malaise which afflicts the characters in Bellow should be more "political" than Bellow, with what seems to me the authority of genius, wants them to be; or he can tell Alan Morehead that in *Gallipoli* he should have argued what is implicit throughout the book anyway—that the campaign seems "quixotic and meaningless in this new universe." Nor does his evaluation of Mary McCarthy's *The Group,* convincing as it is, justify his basilisk-eyed insistence that because she is supposed to be what he says her experience ought to have made her, she could have attended to the trivia in her novel—there are many not uncommendable reasons for her having done so—only by "having wilfully blinded herself to the spirit of moral ambition and the dream of self-transcendence" which are said to have originally produced and beautified her.

The essays are best when they show Podhoretz himself making the effort of "self-transcendence" which he praises or finds lacking in others. His essay on Hannah Arendt is the most passionate in the book, a

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brilliantly argued and eloquent piece, precisely because in confronting her work he is, with no distortions of the subject, exorcising the tendency, which he has in common with her, of insisting that facts and events and mysteries can be constituted as an "issue," in this case of "totalitarianism." It has even been said that Podhoretz illustrates better than does Miss Arendt the accusation he makes against her: that she demonstrates "the intellectual perversity that can result from the pursuit of brilliance by a mind infatuated with its own agility and bent on generating dazzle." But "dazzle" isn't really what Podhoretz is after, however much of it he creates, and it isn't what this book essentially offers. The engaging quality of his writing, and I mean the word "engaging" in every sense, is that it reveals a very sceptical intelligence continually "undoing," by its empiricism, its scrupulousness, its involvement in the stuff of daily experience the "issues" which are its announced concern. This effort isn't what Podhoretz seems to mean by his title *Doings and Undoings,* but it is characteristic that even in the naming of his book his glibness is confronted with the irreducible urgency of his intention.

Richard Poirier

THE POWER OF POSITIVE SEX

IDIOTS FIRST. By Bernard Malamud. Farrar, Straus and Company. $4.50.

Looking up Malamud in Leslie Fiedler's capacious *Love and Death in the American Novel* I find that the treatment of him there is surprisingly brief and unenthusiastic. Given Mr. Fiedler's prepossessions I should have expected him to award Malamud high marks. Fiedler is carrying the torch for "mature genital sexuality"—something that he finds deplorably lacking in the erotic life of the American novel. I have myself just read, not only the recent *Idiots First,* but all of Malamud's work that I can find in print; and my conviction is that the sexual norm of his world is eminently normal, as in fact it would have to be since his people are mostly too busy establishing themselves and their families in an elementally hostile world to feel desire in excessive or distorted forms.

True, they often suffer mildly from an *insufficiency* of sex, especially when they are young. But this suffering is apt to seek relief in the simpler forms of action, namely in going to bed with the opposite sex, or trying to. At worst, the sense of deprivation manifests itself in a sexual

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curiosity so candid as scarcely to deserve the fancy term "voyeurism." In no other author, surely, are so many pretty girls so sweetly obliging about getting undressed in front of their boy friends. "Would you mind if I peeled and went in for a dip?" the girl student asks her teacher in "A Choice of Profession," a story in *Idiots First*. "Go ahead," the teacher says happily, and she does. But "A Choice of Profession" is not one of those steamy romances with a campus setting. The student turns out to have been a call girl in her past life; and the teacher, on her telling him this, recoils from her in fear and disgust even though he himself is so far from being a lily himself that he has been entertaining furtive designs on her. But he is only a prig, not a creep; and the point as finally voiced by him is that "It's hard to be moral."

In Mr. Malamud's novel, *The Assistant,* to be sure, we have in the Italian youth, Frank Alpine, a bad case of distorted sexuality. He is a thief, a peeping Tom and, just once, a rapist. But Frank is by definition an outsider, especially in the Jewish family that shelters him. Even so, he finally atones for everything. He settles down, marries the girl he raped, has himself circumcized and becomes a Jew. The lesson is as clear as the lesson is in *The Golden Bowl,* where James's Anglo-Saxon girl succeeds in reforming *her* beloved Italian, the adulterous American. Essentially the lesson is the same in both authors. Mature sexuality culminating in marriage is the norm. And so potent a force is the norm that it accomplishes not only the regeneration of the erring ones but their actual or virtual assimilation to another culture. Indeed "assimilation," but with the Jew seeking the moral assimilation of the non-Jew, is a basic principle of Malamud's work. And as concerns sex, the power of the Jew is reinforced by his or her relative normality.

If Mr. Fiedler fails to credit Malamud with his own sexual values it is because he has other values which Malamud's work fails to meet. Fiedler is carrying a second torch: for the "Gothic" strain in American fiction. Gothic fantasy, he believes, "provides a way into not only the magic world of the baseball fan . . . but also into certain areas of our social life where nightmare violence and guilt actually exist." The reference here is to Malamud's first novel, *The Natural,* which is about the heroics and horrors of professional baseball. Influenced, apparently, by Nathanael West's mordant dealings with American folklore, *The Natural,* true to its Westian prototypes, explodes at one point into bloody fantasy. This is what Mr. Fiedler means by "Gothic" and it is what he likes about *The Natural.* And so, while praising that book for its "lovely, absurd madness" he reproaches its author for the "denial of the marvellous" implicit in much of his later work, where, says Fiedler, "he turns back

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to the muted, drab world of the Depression as remembered two decades later." For Fiedler, "the denial of the marvellous" seems to be the gravest of apostasies, a dereliction of one's duty to be Gothic. But as I see it, the "marvellous" requires of its user the rarest of talents. The mode of it established by one writer seldom survives imitation by another (consider the fate of Kafka's imitators). And the presence of standardized Gothic equipment in a novel—for example the secret staircases and come-alive portraits in Hawthorne—often substitutes for true literary invention. In any case, so irrelevant are Gothic fancies to Malamud's sturdy characters, so little can they afford the luxury of a "lovely, absurd madness," that they are easily imagined as retorting: "So what's lovely about madness that we should play Ophelia?"

All this by way not so much of quizzing Mr. Fiedler, who has his better moments, but of trying to define Malamud, especially his differences from the "Gothic" or "wacky" strain in contemporary novels from *Catch 22* to *Naked Lunch* to *V*. The differences are notable and tend to align Malamud with such a writer as J. F. Powers rather than with most of the Jewish novelists of today to whom he is generally compared. Like J. F. Powers, Malamud is a mildly conservative force in writing at present, a fact which he, like Powers, perhaps owes in part to his interest in the short story, with its necessary economy and—in the old-fashioned parlance—its highly "conscious art." Not for Powers or Malamud, in any case, those specialities of the modern Gothic, or wacky novel: the "sick" hero, the stateless setting, the general effect of improvised narrative, the marathon sentence which, in its attempt to deliver instantaneously a total physical experience, leaves the reader feeling as if he had been frisked all over by a peculiarly assiduous cop. For the people of Malamud and Powers, Bellevue is out of bounds; they are not *that* sick. Moreover, a distinct localism rules their choice of settings; even when foreign, they are never stateless in the sense given to that word by Mary McCarthy in her account of *Naked Lunch*. In addition, neat patterns are traced on the reader's mind by the movement of the "story lines" of a Malamud or a Powers narrative; there is no effect of improvisation. And their prose avails itself of the special authority, so beautifully exploited by the early Joyce, that is inherent in the short declarative sentence. Norman Podhoretz has noted Malamud's genius for getting the maximum authenticity from the maximum economy of such a statement as, "And there were days when he was sick to death of everything." Here are familiar words and a familiar rhythm for one who is "sick," presumably, in the sadly familiar way of hard-pressed people.

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Malamud's ability to persuade us of the reality of his characters—their emotions, deeds, words, surroundings—remains astonishing. In most of the twelve stories that make up *Idiots First,* that ability is quite as evident as it was in *The Magic Barrel,* his earlier short story collection, and in those long stories we call his novels. There is no accounting for this elusive gift except by terms so trite as to seem like abstractions. His identification with his people tends to be perfect; and it is perfect because, on the one hand, they are mostly Jews of a certain class, as he is, and on the other (to quote Mr. Podhoretz further), they are "copied not from any models on earth but from an idea in the mind of Bernard Malamud." The idea brings about a grand simplification, or specialization, of historical reality. For one thing, Malamud's Jewish community is chiefly composed of people of East European origin. For another, they tend to retain, morally speaking, their immigrant status. Life is centered in the home and the workshop and remains tough and full of threats. The atmosphere is not that of the 1930's Depression alone, as Fiedler says, but that of the hard times ever immanent in the nature of things. Prosper his people may for a while and within limits. But memories and connections continue to bind them to the Old World, in some cases to the world of the Old Testament where Jacob labors for Laban and Job suffers for everyone. Some, it is true, progress to the point of acquiring ineffably Anglo-Saxon first names ("Arthur Fidelman," for example). Some are found claiming that all-American privilege of the post-war period, "a year in Italy." But in Italy they become, or fear to become, immigrants all over again, and the old American theme of innocents abroad is updated. Golden Italy so confounds the professor of "The Maid's Shoes" that he dares open his heart to it not at all. The art student Arthur Fidelman is made of different stuff but not of stuff good enough to prevail against the glorious menace of golden Italy. In the story about him in *The Magic Barrel,* his first days in Rome were shown to be haunted by a crafty alter ego (a "refugee from Israel") and Fidelman lost his notes on Giotto, the "Christian artist." In the two stories about him in *Idiots First* he is still being badly hustled in Italy and his few victories are painfully Pyrrhic.

The Fidelman stories are beautifully done and very funny. Something about them, however, suggest the rigors of a punitive expedition on the part of the author and possibly at his own expense. One remembers his earlier tales of would-be artists and intellectuals—those dreary youths who lie all day on their rooming house beds trying to concentrate on the reading of *Madame Bovary* or on writing novels themselves. And one suspects that in these cases Malamud's identification with his world

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is carried beyond the point of perfection, to a certain guilt and fear. His people seem to be watching him rather than he them. And then there is the story ("Blackness Is My Favorite Color") in which Mr. Malamud tries to motivate the love of a Jewish liquor dealer for a Negro woman by giving him a good deal of wry sensibility. "That was the night she wore a purple dress and I thought to myself, My God, what colors. Who paints that picture paints a masterpiece." This strikes my not wholly unpracticed ear as a mere stereotype of Second Avenue folksiness. Nor are the author's powers of invention quite equal to the demands of the metaphysical fantasy which serves this volume as title story. Here an old man is pursued by Death until he acquires the courage to look Death squarely in the eye, thus winning the desired extension of his borrowed time. Meanwhile each has clarified his position to the other in the artificially racy speech of what seems a kind of bull session. Challenged to explain his lack of "responsibility," Death says, "I ain't in the anthropomorphic business." And the old man yells, "You bastard, don't you know what it means human?" Nor does it help that Malamud, humorizing, calls Death "Ginzburg." He sets out, perhaps, to disinfect Kafka's universe of its total tragedy and ends up approximating the whimsical affirmations of Paddy Chayefsky. Such are the occasional failures of a first rate talent bent upon maintaining his "commitment" to his own people and trying to be as positive as possible. In these cases, commitment, that necessary stage in the development towards freedom of self and imagination, seems to have become an end in itself.

Among the many fine stories in *Idiots First,* two are very fine. One, "The German Refugee," simulates reportage rather than fable—perhaps it *is* reportage—and is the most profound version of the refugee theme I know. The other, "The Death of Me," is the epitome of the author's whole matter and manner—his fabling manner. Marcus, a former tailor, has risen to the level of clothier only to be harassed to death by the furious quarrels of his present tailor, a thin bitter hysterical Sicilian, and his presser, a beefy beery sobbing Pole. Their fury flows from their consciousness of old unhappy far off things in their lives. And the prose in which Malamud renders their deliberate squalor and pain-wrung cries makes their troubles sound like all the troubles that ever were in the world.

To Malamud, Mr. Podhoretz says, "the Jew is humanity seen under the twin aspects of suffering and moral aspiration. Therefore any man who suffers greatly and also longs to be better than he is can be called a Jew." True, and the special appeal of "The Death of Me" comes from its giving the thumbscrew of this theme a decisive turn. Here are two men

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whose sufferings exceed those of Marcus the Jew until, realizing that they are beyond assimilation by his own ethos, he experiences the supreme suffering of despair and gives up the ghost. There is real "madness" in this story—the madness not of Fiedler but, as Henry James would have said, of great art.

F. W. Dupee

VARIETIES OF REVOLUTIONARY EXPERIENCE

ON REVOLUTION. By Hannah Arendt. Viking Press. $6.50.

The neo-conservative vogue in political writing is now almost exhausted. Like other intellectual fashions it drew its strength from passing circumstances, while resting its appeal upon supposedly self-evident truths and eternal principles. The circumstances were bound up with the Cold War in the particular form that it assumed in the 1950's, when the Soviet-American antagonism called for a statement of principles, at any rate on the Western side (the Russians already possessed a coherent body of dogma and only needed to refurbish it in a few particulars). The principles then invoked were substantially those which had validated the Anglo-American war effort against Germany, save that in those innocent days the USSR had officially counted as a "democracy." The discovery that Soviet totalitarianism represented something definite, not to be conjured away by the enunciation of Four Freedoms, Atlantic Charters, or United Nations platitudes, came as a disagreeable shock. Worse followed when some of the new nations went over to the Sino-Soviet camp and others assumed a stance of spiritual neutrality. Faced with these disappointments liberalism fell silent, while its critics were able to ring the changes upon the half-forgotten theme of traditionalism: revolutions (unless consecrated by religion) are subversive of the natural order. The Russian Revolution, being self-avowedly atheist, not only lacked such consecration, but had from the start condemned itself to absurdity by trying to found a commonwealth of unbelievers—something even Robespierre had thought impossible. To resist its claims was to rediscover the perennial truths that inspired the founders of the Greek *polis* and the Roman Republic. In our epoch the only surviving

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embodiment of spiritual health was located in the Anglo-American tradition, and particularly in the United States Constitution; the lesser breeds (specifically the French and other Latins still dazzled by the false glow of 1789) must rest content with an approximation. Their sins, it was suggested, might be forgiven them, on condition that they repented their original presumption. (This, it may be noted, was also the opinion of Pétain and the noble band of self-sacrificing public servants who sustained his devoted labors during the years when the Vichy regime set about dismantling the godless system of civil liberties established by the Republic).

The part played by ordinary hysteria in the propagation of this faith is a matter for conjecture. One surmises that the echo it found among people who normally content themselves with plainer intellectual fare had something to do with the concurrent spread of purely political anxieties. On the face of it there was no compelling reason why the well-known differences between the American and the French tradition should be inflated into a doctrine tending to separate the United States from half its actual and potential allies. As Hannah Arendt pertinently remarks in her new work, "even revolutions on the American continent speak and act as though they knew by heart the texts of revolutions in France, in Russia, and in China, but had never heard of such a thing as an American Revolution" (p. 218). There are reasons for this, some of which she mentions in passing, notably the American habit of equating freedom with "free enterprise." I can only regret that, though Miss Arendt dissociates herself from this thoughtless equation, she has gone the neo-conservatives one better by treating the difference between American and French interpretations of democracy in quasi-theological terms. To genuine Tories, the two revolutions have always looked remarkably alike, and even at the present day one finds a Burkean Whig like Michael Oakeshott deploring the Declaration of Independence in terms usually reserved for Rousseau's spiritual progeny. Among European theologians, Karl Barth thought there was not much difference between the classic manifestoes of 1776 and 1789, though he preferred the American version, for the obvious reason that theology had not been completely extruded and there was some talk of duties as well as rights. Whether this amounts to a difference in principle so great as to warrant the assertion that the French in 1789 made a complete break with the past is a question for philosophers, not for historians. The historian can only register the fact that, by comparison with the French Revolution, the American has remained an isolated phenomenon. It is none of his business to dis-

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cover metaphysical referents for this circumstance, since on any interpretation of what either history or political science is about, such referents do not account for politically relevant happenings in the short run. To take a currently topical example: the recent tentative rapprochement between the Vatican and the Kremlin cannot sensibly be discussed in terms of Thomist and Leninist philosophy, although it is a fact that both have a common source in Aristotle, and that Lenin's writings on the subject sit better with some contemporary Catholics than with most Western liberals. The two levels are simply not closely enough related to permit any meaningful inference to be drawn from such evidence.

I have purposely applied this seemingly far-fetched comparison because Hannah Arendt, throughout her writings and more than ever in her latest offering, shows an inclination to discuss political themes in philosophical terms, and vice versa, until the distinction between metaphysics and politics is lost or dimmed in a twilight zone where it no longer seems to matter whether we are dealing with actual events, contemporary beliefs about these events, or subsequent reflections upon them by thinkers motivated by convictions and interests quite foreign to the participants. At some stage a writer has to decide whether the discussion is to be about the political realm ordinarily so called, or about the most general principles regulating human behavior. It is no use asserting that this distinction was overcome once and for all by Aristotle and his successors. (Who are they? Do they include the medieval Aristotelians who no longer had a *polis* to reflect upon?) Since the 17th century (or according to some people, since Machiavelli) the classical tradition has ceased to be binding upon political thinkers. Those who do not regard political philosophy as a body of truth revealed once and for all to the Greeks, and embellished since then only in unimportant respects, have tended to infer from their own reading of history that "revolutions" in human society (e.g., the industrial revolution) are something quite different from the kind of cyclical movement with which the ancients were familiar. The decline of the city-state is itself not explicable on the assumptions entertained by Aristotle or any other classical thinker—not surprisingly, since they lacked the necessary perspective. If there are permanent principles to be derived from their writings, they can only bear upon certain very general notions, for example, the rule of law. To suppose, as Miss Arendt does, that "the phenomenon of revolution" can be meaningfully discussed in supra-historical terms such as "violence," or related to mythical events ("Cain slew Abel and Romulus slew Remus"),

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is to obliterate several centuries of thought, starting with Vico if not Machiavelli. This is not conservative empiricism but mere dogmatism—as doctrinaire as anything produced by the most extreme rationalists.

Once the discussion is brought down from the metaphysical heaven to the profane earth on which ordinary mortals dwell, the question that puzzles Arendt—why the "disastrous" French Revolution has been so much more influential than the beneficial American one—finds a ready answer, and this quite irrespective of a circumstance to which she herself draws attention: namely that, over much of Europe, absolutism had established a pattern which positively cried out for "totalitarian" violence. Setting this familiar fact aside, the French Revolution was more *radical* than the American in the fundamental sense of the term: it went closer to the roots. For example, it did away with slavery, while the American Revolution confirmed it (thereby condemning a later generation of Americans to the ordeal of Civil War). It also (for a time) did away with theology, but then even quite conservative Protestants have acknowledged that this was simply the penalty visited upon the Catholic Church for its antecedent attempt to stamp out all other forms of thought, including rival brands of Christianity. In short, the French Revolution was more "total" because the *ancien régime* was more coherent (and more despotic) than its Anglo-American counterpart.

These considerations are not irrelevant to the theme of a philosophical essay which sets out to interpret the phenomenon of revolution in the post-medieval age, with a mimimum of historical reference and a maximum of emphasis on the thought processes of those concerned (notably the professional ideologists among them). Since Miss Arendt is, to put it mildly, no historian, it is no great matter that the events themselves remain in the background, or that she occasionally becomes lost in unfamiliar territory, as for example, when she suggests that the Levellers whom Cromwell put down were radical democrats (they were nothing of the sort). So far as France is concerned, it may seem unkind to suggest that the Revolution (as distinct from what some people at the time said and wrote about it) is a closed book to her, but certainly the reader of Georges Lefebvre's great work on the subject will have difficulty relating his account of what actually occurred in France during those years to Miss Arendt's interpretation of what presumably went on in the minds of the participants—or at least of the more prominent and literate among them who had the means for recording their illusions and disappointments in writing. All this is relatively unimportant, as is the somewhat confused presentation

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of her argument, which eschews chronology and wanders back and forth between the Greek concept of the good life (democracy=community) and the modern attempt to fashion a rule of law for people not held together by ties of consanguinity or physical cohabitation in an area small enough for all active citizens to assemble in the market-place. There is, after all, little new to be said about the problematic nature of Rousseauist (or, for that matter, Jeffersonian) notions about politics. But why are we told so little about the religious background? The fundamental fact about the American Revolution surely is that it occurred in a Protestant country with an Anglo-Saxon tradition of limited self-government. Arendt makes much of the contrast between the misery of the French peasant and the relative prosperity of the American farmer; but this is merely the reverse side of the medal. No Protestant population could ever have been beaten down to the French (or Spanish, or Latin American) level. Even the serfs of Prussia were not reduced to quite the existence of the peasant helotry in neighboring Catholic Poland. In the 19th century the landless English farm laborer had a pretty thin time, but it was the Irish peasantry that actually starved *en masse*. These historic circumstances are not irrelevant to Miss Arendt's work, just as it is not immaterial to the theme of her concluding chapter that in present-day Europe the two largest Communist parties are those of France and Italy (or for that matter that Hitlerism arose in Catholic Austria and Bavaria, not in Lutheran Prussia). There are of course sound practical reasons for keeping quiet about this explosive topic, notably in the United States; but a political philosopher who wields so ruthless a scalpel in dissecting the smallest logical flaw in the writings of Rousseau or the speeches of Robespierre might have been expected to cast a little light on so large and important a theme. The modern age—if one is going to talk in these terms—begins with the Reformation. Once Northern and Southern Europe had gone their separate ways (Germany as usual was partitioned), all the rest followed, at any rate if one takes the traditional view that the Dutch Rebellion and the English Civil War set the stage for the American Revolution. Is the traditional view wrong? If not, why is there no mention of Holland—the cradle of the modern world? And why the desperate attempt (p. 36) to persuade the reader that the English Revolution of 1640-60 was not a "real" revolution, because, if you please, the participants at first thought they were restoring the ancient order? What else did the French of 1789 think?

Practically speaking, all this is irrelevant. The French Revolution needs no defense, least of all in an age that has witnessed the German

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counter-revolution. What France might have become if it had not—at great cost admittedly—broken out of the medieval prison-cage can be studied in contemporary Spain. Incidentally, the endless Iberian and Latin-American cycle of bloodletting over the past century-and-a-half is much closer to what the Greeks called *statis* than anything that has occurred in France since 1789. A writer domiciled in the United States might also have reflected upon the curious circumstance that France's relations with her former colonies—including Algeria—are decidedly better than U.S. relations with Latin America (even setting aside the distressing Cuban experience). It seems the messianic and universalist character of the French Revolution, however confusing and even dangerous in the short run, is still paying dividends. This pragmatic argument should appeal to Americans brought up in the decidedly unmessianic spirit of Ben Franklin. Whether it will appeal to Hannah Arendt I doubt. Her cast of mind is unpragmatic and bears a close resemblance to that of some contemporary European ideologists. I hazard the guess that Simone Weil (whom she never mentions) is her favorite writer. It is the more remarkable that she has found a spiritual resting-place among the classic statements of the American faith in reasoned progress and constitutional liberty. These statements have never escaped criticism even from writers who were otherwise in sympathy with the aims expressed in 1776. Bentham thought the Declaration of Independence a "hodge-podge of confusion and absurdity" (*Works,* X. 63), but then Bentham had a poor opinion of any document not composed by himself. On the whole, French, English and American liberals and radicals have over the years worked out a community of mind that transcends their earlier divergencies, and of late this spirit has even shown a capacity for assimilating refugees from Central Europe brought up to regard *all* statements of the liberal faith as so much antiquated nonsense.

Against this background one may question the relevance of an attempt to treat the American experience as an embodiment of traditions and principles foreign to Europeans (with the possible exception of the English). Not that there is any doubt as to the more radical and universal character of the formulation which the common faith received in eighteenth-century France. The French had come on the scene at a moment when the compromise solution worked out by the British in 1688 —constitutional government under oligarchic control—no longer satisfied thinking people who had dimly begun to sense that democracy might become an actual possibility. Along with this went the first stirrings of the industrial revolution and hence the "social problem" in its

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modern form. Leslie Stephen, in his great *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century,* put the matter in words with which we may conclude (II, 114):

> Locke expounded the principles of the Revolution of 1688 and his writings became the political bible of the following century. They may be taken as the formal apology of Whiggism. He gave the source from which later writers drew their arguments, and the authority to which they appealed in default of arguments. That authority vanished when the French Revolution brought deeper questions for solution, and new methods became necessary in politics as in all other speculation.

George Lichtheim

THE VACANT LOT

THE MODERNS: AN ANTHOLOGY OF NEW WRITING IN AMERCA. Edited and with an introduction by LeRoi Jones. Corinth Books. $5.95.

In his unfortunate introduction to this collection, Mr. Jones, in a moment of near-lucidity, explains that he has selected "writing that shows a care for deeper involvement beyond the specific instance of its virtues as 'literature,'" and has been "interested . . . in placing together prose that had some *future,* as literary and social phenomena . . . and not necessarily in that work that could be called good. . . ." In short, he has done his best to make literary criticism beside the point, and in so doing is altogether as academic as the shadow he boxes all through his surly preface. Mr. Jones, it seems, has given up hope for American literature; the amoeboid shapes he presents in its place are nerveless, insensate, and fractured: "literary and social *phenomena.*" Predictably, the most disturbing feature of this collection is its anonymity; most of the prose might be anyone's, might, in fact, have been pieced together from scraps of weekly news-magazines and sociologies: it does not require a voice or a vision. It is rare and surprising when one of these writers arrives at a style, and no easy task for the reader concerned with distinguishing typographical errors from what may be the more revolutionary elements of The New Writing.

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In attempting to categorize these writers, Mr. Jones plays it fast and loose and chooses to make the distinction between urban and non-urban (which to him, "in a more inexact sense," also means eastern and western) writing. This distinction is apparent and misleading; one look at the Appendix, where at least two opposed positions (Rumaker vs. Kerouac) are maintained in theory, indicates that the differences between these writers are somewhat more interesting than their geographical distribution. In fact, they fall into two broad groups: in relation to a community to which they have become imaginatively alien, they serve either as audience or entertainer. Either position is a dead end and precludes the possibility of style, which determines meanings and defines the writer's whereabouts vis-à-vis *what* he describes. Hence, the concerns of this work become more or less unrecognizable.

Although, in this book, environment is supposed to be *"total,"* few of these writers seem able to make the human connections. Consequently, their writing tends to be either totally personal or impersonal in an almost industrial sense: stylistically dislocated or pre-fabricated. Some of these writers tend toward documentation unspoiled by art, others toward "pop art" collages employing, although in ostensibly back-hand ways, mass media techniques. For most of them, Mr. Jones implies, writing has become "not merely . . . a vehicle" but "an event in itself"; if so, it is not a happy event. Whatever its therapeutic value, this ritual makes little or no sense to anyone watching it. And this is exhausted writing, haunted, in Robert Creeley's phrase, by a "brutal dullness."

On the "personal" side of this book, Edward Dorn, for example, is writing from nowhere. His prose is flaccid, distracted, and sophomoric: its subjects are non-existent. The same is true of Paul Metcalf's here-a-page, there-a-page, shapeless fiction; the writing, which, for no apparent reason, at times collapses into improbable verse (or broken prose lines, to be more precise), is awful. "Indian Game" is predictable all the way; it is meant to satisfy the perverse modernist thirst for gratuitous violence, just because violence is simple, something that *happens,* a momentary lifting of the fog of uncertain identities.

Mr. Jones, at least in "The Screamers," breaks through to the real world; his jazzy picture of Negroes in Newark has a playful ferocity which cuts away facile assumptions. His other pieces, unfortunately, are written inside an unclosed parenthesis and all the sense seems to have slipped out the open end. Hubert Selby, Jr. is also aware that a place is defined by its moral as well as geographical limits; he knows Brooklyn cold. But "Another Day Another Dollar," a deadly accurate ice-cold eye-witness report, is a work existing outside of art. "A Penny

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For Your Thoughts," however, the story of a man with an outrageous but entirely credible obsession, puts the facts into a sly and witty shape and reaches fiction.

The selections by Fielding Dawson are grim and quiet, "dimly envisioned," hung-over with an unkillable sense of futility. In some sense, Mr. Dawson's work marks the crisis-point of "personal" writing; it bears the deep scars of a corrosive distrust and skepticism as to the ultimate value or possibility of expression, even of feeling, and is, in its curious way, intent on destroying itself.

The "impersonal," ready-made writers substitute wisecracks for wisdom; in lieu of style, they are content with soft-sell techniques which show a breakdown of dignity and of distinctions between the public and private life. This accounts, in part, for their wide success; this is writing that can easily be absorbed by the set-up. It is entertaining and has no sharp edges: the techniques themselves are so powerful that they either neutralize or obliterate all meaning. Hence, there are a couple of pages of double-spaced dialogue here by Diane Di Prima which read like a Feiffer cartoon, though Miss Di Prima isn't looking for laughs.

Douglas Woolf, however, is; his "Work In Flight Grounded," an exasperatingly cute description of a transcontinental flight, is written for people amused by everything. There was a time when Mort Sahl only had to come out onto a stage and say "Eisenhower" to break everyone up; that is the way Mr. Woolf writes. Of course, when the stewardess with the "gluttonous" smile came down the aisle with magazines, our hero "let her go, for someone had beat him to Big Table." That elbow nudging you in the side sets your teeth on edge.

This same offensive complacency runs through Mr. Kerouac's prose, coupled with exhibitionism. These are the hot flashes of a trade journalist for those "who make the mad night all the way (four-day sex orgies, three-day conversations, uninterrupted transcontinental drives)." "CITYCitycity," in contrast to Mr. Kerouac's usual travel tips for human marginalia, comes as a surprise; it is a mildly interesting, almost political, bit of science-fiction which indicates that he is not completely without imagination and can, occasionally, manage to tear himself away from the rear-view mirror.

John Rechy, like the "birls" who wander dazedly through his hysterical documentaries, can only throw up his hands and giggle "Too Much" when he looks at America. And yet Mr. Rechy, who can say, without flinching, that "searchlights screw the sky," who can talk about "jukeboxes rattling rock and roll sexsounds," who can, after all these years, proclaim that "Jazz musicians came up the long, long river,

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bringing American jazzmoans," is contemptuous of *Time* magazine's writing. This scorn is indeed mysterious, for the elements (rhetoric, word fusions, agitation of surface, synthetic language and hotshot stance) of Mr. Rechy's own non-stop sick comic monologue are no less preposterous. This is why Mr. Rechy is at his best when he writes about Southern California: his techniques correspond, for once, to the lunar world he describes. In one of its most extreme expressions, Mr. Rechy represents what has happened to the "impersonal" writers here; passive and unresisting, he has become a receptacle for experience, is overrun and invaded by it: he is, in short, selling his sensory data.

William Burroughs's "Cut-Up Method," a parlor game in itself no more interesting than computer prose or the monkeys typing out *Hamlet*, is symptomatic of the same frustration and impotence: it, too, is a way of masturbating the language. Mr. Burroughs's misplaced cinematic technique makes all life literary. His intelligence is parasitic: it kills whatever it touches, substitutes "Vaudeville Voices" for human beings. Although his single-shot demolition of "The Life Time Change" ("The news is served, sir") is one of the shrewdest things in this book, it is not very much. In a series of news flashes, Mr. Burroughs, the "ape of history," writes like his own mind-blasting "Berserk Machine," producing an endless "flesh tape" in which reality and hallucination copulate wildly.

Still, not all of this writing is fractured and frozen into such hideous shapes. Michael Rumaker's stories, though they are awkward and halting, have the kind of simple purpose so conspicuously absent from Mr. Kerouac's tiresome "spontaneous" themeless variations. Mr. Rumaker's comments in the Appendix indicate that he is working toward intuitive form, i.e., toward forms which are still imaginatively possible after objects have been mauled by analysis and self-expression. Robert Creeley's stories are coy and crafty. At its best, his prose gnaws quietly at the consciousness; at its worst, it closes its eyes and goes off whistling, its meanings all lost in its pockets. And William Eastlake, when he is not writing local color ("his eyes the color of between the clouds") scenarios or lapsing into advertisements ("they shared a togetherness of ignorance"), has something to say.

The best thing by far in this book, though, is Russell Edson's "Selections from *Gulping's Recital.*" It makes good sense, is imaginative, lyrical, screamingly funny and shrewdly written. Mr. Edson is able to distance himself from the elements of his work and is not paralyzed by his own techniques; his marvelous, deadpan, throat-clearing, All-right-men-this-is-serious style sets the cold war rhetoric on its ear: ". . . We

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were set out against the enemy, dressed in the colors of the wood. The vegetable pretense."

From the looks of this book as a whole, however, it seems apparent that American writing has taken a terrific, albeit subliminal, beating at the hands of the mass media, and that the practice of making junk sculptures in the vacant lot of language behind the Advertising Factory is no longer even amusing. The two alternatives of commercialism or isolation are eating away at the core of fiction: *the will*; and if this book is at all typical in the obliteration by experience or numb acceptance of lifelessness evidenced by so many of these writers, the damage has now reached tragic proportions. To survive, writing will have to become a weapon against, not a symptom of, senseless tedium and cultural outrage; American writers will have to resist, not help sell, the internal invasion.

Stephen Donadio

THE NEW HISTORY

HISTORY AS ART AND SCIENCE. By H. Stuart Hughes. Harper and Row. $3.95.

The philosophy of history was once a major concern of the great philosophers, but what they wrote never seems to the practicing historian to have much to do with his craft. The historians who speculate on the philosophical assumptions of their discipline are too often philosophical innocents. Typical of their ruminations are the tedious addresses given annually by Presidents of the American Historical Association—dreary and banal "philosophical" performances by historians who are, in their own bailiwicks, respected and often brilliant scholars and craftsmen.

H. Stuart Hughes may turn out to be the most notable American exception to these strictures. The five essays in this volume are slight—they were originally informal talks. The fourth essay, "The Sweep of the Narrative Line," is the kind of thin philosophizing which would do for one of those Presidential Addresses. But the essays as a whole are the work of a distinguished historian talking sense about what the historian does and what the study of history is. Hughes, a propagandist of

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the current revolution in historical investigation, compares it with the revolution in science:

> In our century, the natural scientists have made great advances by throwing aside their old assumptions and striking out on new and uncharted lines of thought. The same is now beginning to be true of historians. I think it is quite possible that the study of history today is entering a period of rapid change and advance such as characterized the science of physics in the first three decades of the twentieth century.

The change has come none too soon, for history was not so long ago faced with a desperate future, its methods seemingly certain and fixed so that they could be taught to any bright graduate student who had the necessary *sitzfleisch,* and nothing more exciting to do than "fill in the gaps" or prepare the definitive edition of one more set of documents. Unfortunately, the endless filling of gaps and accumulation of documents seemed to promise less and less in the way of important and relevant knowledge, and the intelligent historian found that he could go on filling gaps for longer than he would care to.

Hughes sketches the renewal as a rethinking of the *historismus* of the German idealists and of nineteenth century positivist history. Taking Croce and Marc Bloch as typical of each, respectively, Hughes says that "Croce taught us to see the writing of history as an exercise of creative thought; the French showed us how we could ground this thought in the directly perceived evidences of a vanished past." From Croce, the historian learned to see himself as a thinker and an artist; from Bloch and the French realists, he came to see himself as a scientist dealing with the facts.

The modern historian is encouraged by the idealist to use his imagination, and warned by the positivist to hold fast to the "hard" data if he is to be a scientist instead of a fabulist who plays tricks on the dead. From the facts he sets limits to his imagination: they serve as a barrier against what is demonstrably false, what is clearly contrary to the evidence. But within those limits he is free to range and to speculate on the possible and the probable. He may not be able to say, with certainty, what is true; but he can say what is false. Having rejected the false and impossible and having established from the evidence the limits of the possible within which his imagination is free to wander, he sets to work, half-scientist, half-humanist, a historian.

Now the historian is able to draw upon recent discoveries in other disciplines. From the sociologist he borrows concepts of class, status, and

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role; from the economist and the political scientist and the demographer he learns the uses of statistics and the calculus of probability; anthropology, biology, psychology, and the humanities provide fresh matter and new ideas. One of the essays in the volume illustrates how historians have been freed in recent years to reflect upon the discoveries of anthropologists. Historians have always known, for example, that medieval suits of armor prove that medieval man was smaller than modern man; the anthropologist shows us how to make this knowledge meaningful. Historians know an enormous amount about the languages and dialects of the peoples of the past; anthropologists and anthropological linguists have shown how much we may safely deduce from this knowledge. And, as we know, historians discovered the industrial revolution; but anthropologists, studying the impact of modern technology on primitive societies, teach us what that revolution did to the psyche of western man.

A chapter on "History and Psychoanalysis," not only explores what the historian has borrowed from the analyst—Eric Erikson's *Young Man Luther* is, of course, a prime model—but goes on to draw a fascinating parallel between analysis and historical interpretation. In a way, says Hughes, "psychoanalysis *is* history." Analyst and historian alike seek an interpretation of the facts which, although not empirically verifiable, is not disprovable, is probable, and is convincing because it makes the facts meaningful. Both seek to uncover human motives, rational and irrational, and in both cases the discovery is liberating: personal therapy for the patient and historical freedom for men, since man is condemned to repeat his history when he does not understand it. Both analyst and historian collect and study the facts as scientists; but for both the end is an imaginative arrangement of the facts in a narrative—case history or history.

Finally, in the pages of this little book we have an explanation of one of the most striking intellectual phenomena of our time—the emergence of the historian as a modern Nestor. Historians are officials counselors of Presidents and Prime Ministers; history is the favorite major for those college students whose intellectual and professional aims are as yet unfixed, but who want a broad liberal education. The philosopher of our era has vacated the chair of speculative thought and no longer talks about the big questions which interest all thinking men. The literary critic has a hard job filling the role of universal pundit since so much of the best literature of our time is esoteric: he inevitably talks mostly about books and poems which the educated public has not read. The historian, however, as the scholar whose method is rigorous and in-

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tellectually exacting, but whose work is interesting and intelligible to amateurs, acts as both scientist and humanist. As such he has begun to take over the role abandoned by the philosopher and the critic.

Hughes, himself, is such a historian. R. H. Tawney was a famous one. The most recent example I know is Peter Gay whose studies of the Enlightenment are a more powerful defense of the party of humanity and a more devastating critique of the hocus pocus of authoritarianism, political or religious, than we expect from contemporary philosophers and critics.

Incidentally, nothing in these essays has any relation to the mystical balderdash of the Preface contributed by Ruth Nanda Anshen, the editor of the series, *World Perspectives,* of which this is apparently Volume 32. Miss Anshen tells us that "History is to be understood as concerned not only with the life of man on this planet but as including also such cosmic influences as interpenetrate our human world." H. Stuart Hughes, I am glad to report, shows us nothing of these influences.

Richard Schlatter

THE PASSION OF OUR LADY

OUR LADY OF THE FLOWERS. By Jean Genet; translated by Bernard Frechtman. Grove Press. $6.50.

This first English translation of *Notre-Dame des Fleurs* (Genet's first novel, written in 1942, in Fresnes Prison) is prefaced by a sizeable extract from Jean-Paul Sartre's *Saint-Genet, Comédien et Martyr,** a long, brilliant, extravagant analysis that makes extraordinary claims for Genet. Attaching this preface was no doubt a piece of astute publishing: for many readers, Sartre on Genet will be considerably more interesting than Genet himself. Sartre's vocabulary, his "existential psychoanalysis," it often seems, are alone able to do justice to Genet's creation, and for no one can a reading of *Saint-Genet* fail to "contaminate" a reading of *Our Lady.* But this is reason enough to try to free the novel from Sartre's allegory.

The genesis and initial situation of *Our Lady of the Flowers* is

* Which has also recently been translated.

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by now well known: Genet, in his cell at Fresnes, is masturbating. He is inventing a story based on all the queens, pimps, and male whores he has known, from whom he is now separated. The purpose of this act of literary creation is auto-erotic, and he is interested in his characters only so long as they maintain his sexual excitement. Such a genesis may not be without precedent—one recalls Rousseau's description of the state in which he wrote *La Nouvelle Héloise,* and many characters in fiction probably originated in their creator's more or less erotic feelings for them. Yet it is difficult to think of another author whose love of his creation is so pragmatic, so exclusive and infantile. Creative love—inclusive, mature—has often been a means by which the novelist could know and free the potentialities of his characters, but Genet's narcissist's world, deprived of liberty, is closed and self-reflexive.

Genet is aware of this: "My books are not novels," Sartre quotes him as saying, "because none of my characters makes a decision on his own." The story of Divine, from boyhood to death in a pool of vomited blood in a garret, is a series of carefully contrived encounters that permit Genet passively to experience seduction, exclusion, jealousy, betrayal, aging, heroism, death. A night world of Pigalle, inhabited by Darling, Our Lady, Mimosa, Seck Gorgui, Gabriel, is called forth and informed with life as erotic necessity dictates. The narrative hesitates, reaches out uncertainly for its objects, improvises—and then the proper situation is found, a meeting completed, and the narrator can come to climax. The passages of subsequent repose often have a barren, deserted quality—a world returned to a time previous to life. Narrative past tense frequently gives way to a present that brings the author's creations face to face with him, seeming to abolish (but thereby also emphasizing) the cell walls: "Darling and Divine. To my mind, they are the ideal pair of lovers. From my evil-smelling hole, beneath the coarse wool of the covers, with my nose in the sweat and my eyes wide open, alone with them, I see them." Genet, protagonist, author of and within the book, writes day by day, not to record what happens, not to rearrange reality, but to substitute for life, to forge Divine's existence as a negation of his own deprivations.

Imitation, celebration, rejection are all active in Genet's style. His language is highly imaged, often fancy and queenish, onanistically self-indulgent. Some of it seems borrowed—from a French tradition of literary religiosity and satanism—and at times, as Sartre remarks, it possesses the talismanic quality of medieval literature. It can be elaborately boring, but it can also achieve an extraordinary union of elegance with violence and *argot* in a style entirely appropriate to a world both artificial and

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strongly physical. (Similarly, in the poem "Le Condamné à mort," Genet manages *argotique* and obscene language within the formal structure of the *alexandrin.*) Obviously such a style presents infinite difficulties for the translator, especially since the *argot* of a given French milieu is apt to be more of a constituted language than any English equivalent. Bernard Frechtman has met the difficulties with a fine attention to meaning and tone. One will always have cavils—but how *do* you translate "Tu es mon Affolante," anyway?

Where, ultimately, is the reader's locus of interest in the elaborate puppetry of *Our Lady of the Flowers*? Sartre has a simplistic answer: "We are fascinated by someone else's loves." When they are as flamboyant and urgent as Genet's, this may well be so. But such an interest remains exotic, like that the French once took in *le roman américain,* which was supposed to be all about primitivism, lynchings, and incest, and Genet's book is more than another of those novels which exist solely to exploit a milieu unknown to the reader. What most actively engages us is the relation between Genet and the characters who excite him, the play between a creating mind and the possibilities it sees in the world it has made. Through the loves of Darling and Divine, we are returned to the cell and to the enforced solipsism that made the novel necessary. The fiction, Genet insinuates, cannot be so limited as he intended:

> This story may not always seem artificial, and in spite of me you may recognize in it the call of the blood: the reason is that within my night I shall have happened to strike my forehead at some door, freeing an anguished memory that had been haunting me since the world began. Forgive me for it. This book aims to be only a small fragment of my inner life.

The freeing of memory, the enlargement of the inner life, make us finally aware that we have to a degree been experiencing the itinerary of a soul: "The longest detours lead back to my prison, to my cell. Now, almost without trimmings, without transposition, without any intermediary, I could tell of my life here. My present life." But Genet does not continue to describe life in Fresnes; rather, we are told how Darling the pimp, himself in prison, learned of the arrest of Our Lady. What follows is the best section of the novel, the interrogation and trial of Our Lady. The best, because Genet's inner pilgrimage has somehow released a new, fuller, broader love for Our Lady: an "intermediary" has come to life. The trial scene itself is a masterpiece of absurdity—like the trial in Camus' *The Stranger,* but more remarkable since Genet's

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scene is recorded, not from the point of view of an alienated narrator, but from a detached, olympian vantage. The psychiatrist's jargon, the jurors' hypocrisy, the lawyers' futility, and Our Lady's outrageous final reply force us to an unexpected recognition of our feelings for this character, whose destiny now seems exemplary.

It is here that one might see the justification of Sartre's claims for the value of Genet as criminal literature. Sartre argues that since we, at present enclosed in our subjectivity, will by history be judged as object and found guilty, it is vital that we understand the response which Genet, already convicted, represents: "our solitude pushed to the point of Passion." Such a claim seems to me more legitimately put forth for Genet's plays—perhaps because the notion is in itself theatrical: one thinks at once of something like *The Blacks*—and could apply to *Our Lady* only if the novel implicated us in its rejections. It doesn't, because its rejections are made its private pleasures; Genet builds his world to caress it, not to catch the bourgeois reader in a horror of connivance. The Passion of Our Lady is violent and beautiful, but the martyrdom of Divine-Genet is too passive and self-indulgent for the novel as a whole to count as much as Sartre thinks it does.

Peter Brooks

LESSONS IN DEMOCRACY

THE FIRST NEW NATION: THE UNITED STATES IN HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE. By Seymour Martin Lipset. Basic Books. $5.95.

Mr. Lipset's recent book, *The First New Nation,* is a work its author obviously didn't expect anybody to read attentively. He can scarcely have read it himself, though there is ample evidence that he wrote it. The cumulative effect is to make one despair of one's own logical and intellectual faculties.

The author states that "in addition to explaining 'what makes America tick,' this book is designed to suggest how the sociologist's analysis of value systems can contribute to the systematic study of the development of a nation's institutions." He deals with "the historical sources and the specific nature of the American social system," (Parts

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I and II) and with "the varying ways in which stable democracies, viewed comparatively, may occur" (Part III), choosing six democratic countries (including the United States) for discussion. The task which Lipset has set himself is clearly an enormous one. But in a preface, he writes, by way of a disclaimer, that "significant innovators in any field must be prepared to learn that they have been in error; these are the risks inherent in opening new perspectives on old problems." Apparently he has overlooked the fact that one need not be a "significant innovator" in order to be in error.

This book is indeed full of errors of a peculiar kind, namely contradictions. Between "thesis" and "antithesis"—actually statement and contradiction—there may stretch spaces of a hundred pages, a chapter, two pages, one paragraph; and there are even instances in which a single sentence asserts and contradicts itself, such as the following. Here Lipset is discussing the six democratic nations.

> They all have democratic political systems. Yet they differ in *one* important respect: the United States, Britain, Canada, and Australia have *stable* policies, while France and Germany *have (or have had)* unstable ones. (Italics mine)

The difference can't have been so "important," can it? And there are very few theses or assertions in *The First New Nation* which are not "supplemented" by a counter-opinion or a piece of evidence in support of the opposite. In the course of the book important and less important assertions switch from positive to negative apodictic, and vice versa. This

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"dialectical" method finally takes us to the point where criticism simply has to stop and give up. And it gradually becomes clear how in the past Lipset seems to have been able to disarm his critics. He has contrived a kind of non-thinking, so that when one finishes such a work as *The First New Nation* there is actually almost nothing left to agree or disagree with. In one way or another he manages constantly to undo his own ideas and arguments; he qualifies them out of existence, and by the end of the book most of them are reduced to nothing.

Lipset also has a pronounced tendency to quote *in extenso*. Quotation is certainly an essential scholarly device, and contributes to the integration and synthesis of knowledge. But many of the quotations and references in this work are used to back up—through mere repetition—ideas Lipset himself puts forward. This represents innocence of the simplest procedures of scholarship and argumentation; it confuses agreement with authority, and fails even to rise to the elementary logic of evidence: because some other writer shares an opinion with you has nothing to do with the truth or untruth of the idea; nor does it make that idea any more of a "fact." In short, Lipset is quite unable to distinguish between the logical modes of demonstration and assertion—a failing not altogether rare among social scientists. In a number of instances which I have checked, Lipset more often than not cites out of context and distorts the original meaning so radically that his sources appear to be saying something quite different or even the opposite of what they in fact did say. In one of the most peculiar instances of this practice, we find Lipset doing it to his own work. In the chapter, "A Changing American Character?", which is primarily directed against David Riesman and William H. Whyte, Lipset writes:

> Foreign travelers' accounts of American life, manners, and character traits constitute a *body of evidence* with which to *test* the thesis that the American character has been transformed during the past century and a half. Their observations provide us with a kind of comparative mirror in which we can look at ourselves over time. It is important to note, therefore, that the type of behavior Riesman and Whyte regard as *distinctly modern,* as reflecting the decline of the Protestant Ethic, was repeatedly reported by many of the nineteenth-century travelers as a peculiarly American trait in their day. Thus the English writer Harriet Martineau at times might be paraphrasing *The Lonely Crowd* in her description of the American of the 1830's. . . . (Italics mine)

Here, in *The First New Nation* (Lipset also uses de Toqueville's writings as "evidence"), Riesman and Whyte are told that they failed to take

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the travelers' reports into account. The corresponding passage in Lipset's earlier *Political Man* runs as follows:

> As early as the nineteenth century foreign observers were struck by the "other-directedness" of Americans. . . . This image of the American as "other-directed" can, *as Riesman notes*, be found in the writings of *Tocqueville and other curious and astonished visitors from Europe.* Harriet Martineau almost seems to be paraphrasing Riesman's own description of today's "other-directed" man in her picture of the early nineteenth-century American. . . . (Italics mine)

It's not 1984 yet, but as far as I am concerned this is pretty good memory-holing. In such a context of intellectual sloppiness and mess (to say the least) it doesn't even matter any more what Riesman and Whyte once

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said or didn't say. Nevertheless, as if it all mattered, three pages further on Lipset is reversing himself again:

> Although these accounts of travelers and American essayists *cannot* be taken as *conclusive proof* of an unchanging American character, they do suggest that the hypothesis which sees the American character changing with respect to the traits "inner-" and "other-directedness" *may be incorrect.* (Italics mine)

The "body of evidence" has vanished, and the "comparative mirror," like the mirror of the Lady of Shalott, has cracked wide open.

At just about this point, Plato is summoned to the bar. Lipset asks him to bear witness to other-directedness as an essential element of democracy, of *stable* democracy no less. "As Plato noted, and as the foreign travelers testify" (here we go again) "democratic man is deeply imbued with the desire to accommodate to others, which results in kindness and generosity in personal relations. . . ." But where does Plato note this and how? Lipset presents a rather long quotation which would be—had he quoted correctly—utterly useless for his purposes. For Socrates describes how democracy (which in his opinion isn't something good to begin with) deteriorates into despotism by its excessive emphasis on equality, a *disease* which befalls democracy and makes its "way into the home, until at last the very animals catch the infection of anarchy" (*Republic,* VIII, 562). Naturally, Lipset hasn't included the other-directed, equalitarian, democratic and domesticated animal in his quotation, for equality is one of the two value-pillars upon which his stable democracy rests.

But the key to Lipset's thinking is in his interest in the "independent explanatory power of value analysis" *and* stable democracy—somehow the two seem inseparable. To demonstrate this power he chooses as his foremost object "America's key values—equality and achievement." It is these two values "which stem from our revolutionary origin"; they determined the early history of American and continued "to influence the form and substance of American institutions in later years." In Lipset's mind these two "basic values" have been and still are the generating motor of American culture. By equality Lipset means that Americans

> believe all persons must be given respect simply because they are human beings; we believe that the differences between high- and low-status pople reflect accidental, and perhaps temporary, variations in social relationships. . . .
>
> [The value Americans] have attributed to *achievement* is a corollary to our belief in equality. *For people to be equal, they need a chance to become equal.* Success, therefore, should be

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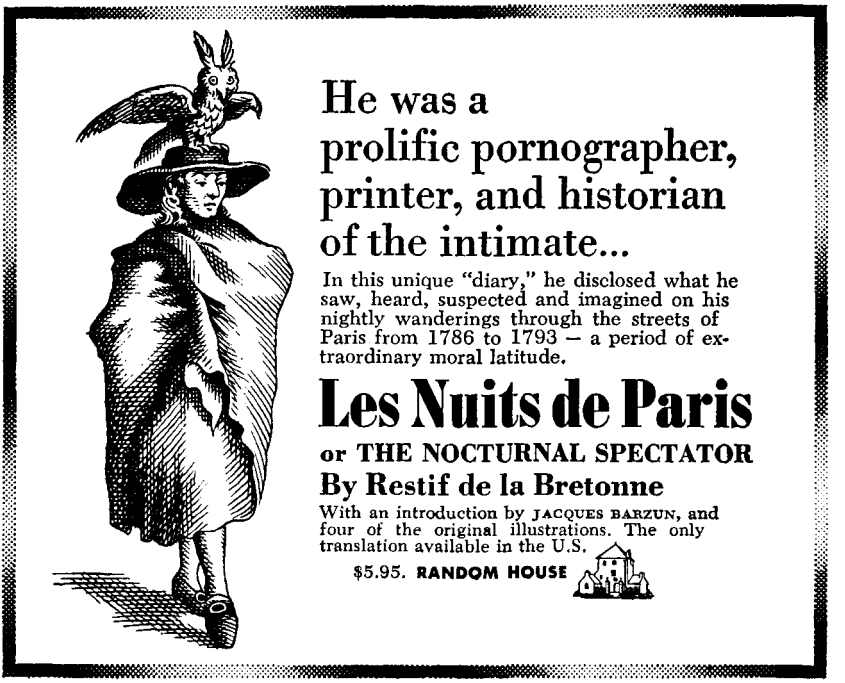
> attainable by all, no matter what the accidents of birth, class or race. Achievement is a function of equality of opportunity. That this emphasis on achievement must lead to new inequalities of status and to the use of corrupt means to secure and maintain high positions is the ever recreated and renewed American dilemma. (Italics mine)

This passage doesn't only indicate what Lipset and, according to him, Americans at large hold dear, but also how these two "not entirely incompatible" values are related. At first glance the passage is rather inconspicuous and somehow even seems to make a sort of sense. If one examines it closely however, the passage soon gives way, and what we wind up with is a familiar set of pious tautologies. As a distinguished American critic once put it, "we who are liberal and progressive know that the poor are our equals in every sense except that of being equal to us."

However questionable Mr. Lipset's logic may be, his thesis is that it is these two values—equality and achievement—which once moved and still do move American history, character, and institutions. They are in addition the objects upon which the "independent explanatory power of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value analysis" is to be demonstrated. But this power is supposed to be independent of what? Of the *materialistic* explanatory devices which, for instance, according to Lipset, Messrs. Riesman and Whyte have used. In a section called "The Inadequacy of a Materialistic Interpretation of Change," Mr. Lipset levels this accusation against them: "theirs is a purely materialist interpretation of social phenomena and is open to the criticism to which such interpretations are susceptible." His own two values, however, quite obviously are supposed to belong to the *Ueberbau* and are to be taken as "immaterial" in nature, and his effort is "to present some of the evidence for my thesis that it is the basic value system, as solidified in the early days of the new nation, which *can account* for the kind of changes that have taken place in the American character and in American institutions as these *faced the need to adjust to the requirements* of an urban, industrial, and bureaucratic society." Twisted and tortured as these arguments may seem, there is always room for still further contortion; Lipset's concluding statement runs: "This chapter essentially has urged that a materialistic interpretation of American society sharply underestimates the extent to which basic national values, once institutionalized, *give shape to the consequences* of technological and economic change." What are "consequences," and what are "requirements?" Yet for all this Lipset remains truly convinced that he hasn't dealt with anything but values. Even though at the end of his work he admits that it "is necessarily subject to the sins of over-simplification and exaggeration," he nonetheless continues:

> Exaggeration is present because any effort to analyze the influence of only one set of factors, even if it is as important as the national value system, tends to disregard many other variables which are *obviously necessary for the proper understanding of the variations involved.* For example, *important economic variables* such as differences in past rates of economic growth . . . all of which may have an independent effect on the various national patterns discussed, have *largely been ignored here,* partly because I have dealt with them in other works, but more significantly because a major purpose of this book has been to demonstrate the independent explanatory power of value analysis, seen as the codification of historical experience. (Emphasis mine).

How is one to deal with such a combination of arrogance and humility, of innocence and canny caution?

But it gets even worse. For Lipset provides all the evidence a materialist of the kind he has in mind needs. In a section on "Establishing

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National Authority" in new nations—such as early America and the new states of contemporary Asia and Africa—he argues that "a basic condition for acquiring legitimacy in a new state is effectiveness, particularly in the *economic sphere*. In return for support, the populace demands from its leaders rewards, some symbolic in content, such as national heroes and prestige, and others, perhaps more important, of a *tangible* nature." It is this "Need for 'Pay-Off'" which once satisfied fosters the legitimatizing of authority. Lipset then innocently proceeds to introduce both values, equality and achievement, and moves on to conclude that the "revolutionary, democratic values that thus became part of the national self-image, and the basis for its authority structure, gained legitimacy as they proved to be effective—that is, as the nation prospered."

In a key section, Lipset examines religion as that American institution which is "most intimately connected with the value system." He states that Americans have always been of an "exceptional religiosity" (again testified to by the travelers), and that they "continue to be a highly religious people." (This latter assertion is "proved" primarily by the use of church affiliation statistics.) In this section of the text, Max Weber is summoned forth to give false testimony. If one bothers to refer to the pages which Lipset cites, one finds that Weber presents what is virtually a sardonic account of the "exceptional religiosity" of Americans. "If one looked more closely at the matter in the United States," Weber says, "one could easily see that the question of religious affiliation was almost always posed in social life and in business life which depended on permanent and credit relations." And Weber recounts an incident he himself witnessed while he was in America. He had attended a baptism ceremony, and a friend explained to Weber the newly baptized man's motive for going through this ritual—he wanted to open a bank in the community. Strangely enough, Lipset doesn't accuse Weber of interpreting such matters in a "very materialistic fashion," as he does accuse that other traveler who remarked on what is unremarkably true—that American clergymen resemble businessmen.

Value analysis may indeed be a powerful instrument in the sociological armory. In Lipset's hands, however, it is powerless to penetrate that notoriously tough and recalcitrant American "reality." Seen in the light of the evidence which he himself offers, the two basic values are progressively revealed to be mere euphemisms. He sometimes refers to them as ideologies, but such references can only be understood as slips of the tongue. Whether they are in fact part of the American ideology is a separate question, but they are certainly part of Lipset's ideology. For if one strips away that *valuable* superstructure of rationalizations

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from Lipset's account of the American political system, what one is left with is nothing more than the picture of a money-ridden society governed by economic interests. Mr. Lipset's vision of American society corresponds almost point by point with the classic materialist diagnosis—with the exception that his two values, superadded to the whole, are like some magical icing supposed to transform the cake, or perhaps to disguise it.

It would, however, be unjust to Lipset to hold him personally responsible for these so-called values, these potent yet ever-so-immaterial agents. This isn't the first time that equality and achievement have been discussed as essential parts of the American Dream. In point of fact, a whole generation of social commentators have established themselves through analysing that dream. One may be permitted to wonder to what extent they also fabricate it. For if one follows Lipset's efforts with reasonable care, one can hardly miss seeing such familiar mechanisms as displacement, condensation, secondary elaboration, as well as repression, at work. (After all, who formulates to a large degree the consciousness of a time? It's certainly not the man in the street.) In the American Dream of Seymour Martin Lipset, even the primary processes can be seen breaking through, revealing what is being repressed. And although Lipset himself is a convenient subject for the study of such processes, whole generations of social scientists have been busy stowing away the same object of anxiety: it is the corpse of that unwelcome, unacknowledged, and illegitimate ancestor in their lineage which still keeps growing right in the middle of their parlor, like the corpse in Ionesco's *Amedée*. This spectre which keeps haunting the family of modern sociologists is the very material ghost of St. Marx. And social scientists, in large numbers, still keep trying to take this very material ghost and fly up with it to the heaven of eternal ideas, of "values." They hope to "translate" him and so exorcise his spirit. But so long as exorcisms of Lipset's kind are being administered—he believes he has borrowed the formulae for his incantations from Max Weber, whose *spirit*, he says, he feels indebted to—I wonder whether Marx's analysis of the production of ideologies (only another name for rationalization, in this case of a social unconscious) is not still substantially correct. For in the largest number of instances "value analysis" means little more than a handy way of dispensing with Marx, and with the problems that his theories and analyses raise.

Karl August Wittfogel in his "Marxist Study" on *Das Wissenschaft in der buergerlichen Gesellschaft* (1922), seems to have been right when he said that to disprove or argue against Marx too vigorously makes a scholar suspect and may even damage his career, for intensive concern

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probably indicates excessive involvement. Following Wittfogel's advice, Lipset, like most of his colleagues, plays it cool when it comes to Marx, and deals with him by a kind of casual avoidance. Yet this will not do. One need not be a Marxist oneself to see that the *intellectual* problems which a Marxist analysis of American society and political life raise are exactly those which Mr. Lipset has no real way of dealing with. Indeed the danger as well as the inadequacy of Lipset's style of "value analysis," is, as I have tried to indicate, that if you merely take a peek behind those values, what is revealed is nothing other than a standard Marxist vision of—not democracy, which Lipset is concerned to champion, but the bourgeois political world of the capitalist phase of production. And who wants to defend *that?* Not even Seymour Martin Lipset.

Gertrud Lenzer

TWO FIRSTS

THE BENEFACTOR. By Susan Sontag. Farrar, Straus and Company. $4.50.
THE SUN'S ATTENDANT. By Charles Haldeman. Simon & Schuster. $4.95.

A first novel, *The Benefactor* is *the* first novel which attempts to extract from psychoanalytical theory an image of what the resurrected body would be like. It demands of its character—for it has only one character, and a number of shadowy emanations and specters around him—activity of a kind that in contrast to our current fictional modes can only be called play. Such activity (described in the mild, detached, seamless voice that fills this book until we gasp for air, for light, for *otherness*) is based not on anxiety, on the friction and aggression which are the subject of our novels these days, and perhaps of all novels up to now, but on narcissism and erotic exuberance.

In order to avoid even the semblance of recording life's surfaces, as they are made known to us by our "social" senses, the author has resorted to the semblances of convention, chiefly relying on a prose as varnished and desiccated as that of Constant, say, or of Stendhal in *Armance,* though here the shellac crystallizes much too often (for those writers) into aphorisms, one of the author's irresistible inconsistencies. I imagine it is hard to renounce a talent for *maximes* so pronounced:

Ambition, if it feeds at all, does so on the ambition of others. . . .

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> It is easier to endure than to change. . . .
>
> The truth is always something told, not something known. If there were no speaking or writing, there would be no truth about anything. There would only be what is. . . .
>
> The most exacting forms of spirituality are usually found among heretics. . . .
>
> Being shocked is the dullard's substitute for the pleasures of the imagination. . . .
>
> Dreams are the poetry, disease the prose of the imagination. . . .
>
> Ritual is that way of performing an act which guarantees the need of doing it again. . . .

Another of the author's means of warning us that we are to take her intentions presentationally, not representationally—for what they are, not for what they seem to be—is her internationalism. The book avoids taking place anywhere save in a France and a Paris of the imagination (the Café de Flore is never named); its hero (a figure, a function, far more than a personality) is playfully named Hippolyte, and the members

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of the *totentanz* around him have motto names: Jean-Jacques, Trissotin and the *ewig-weibliche* Frau Anders. They plotlessly collapse into each other like telescope joints, as the narrator-hero keeps shortening his sights on his subject—how to live a life of one's own, unconditioned by work, art, social achievement or communal effort. At the end of his recital, invoking all those other ironic, distancing effects of the old prose convention—the catalogue, the enclave of letters, the quotations from abandoned journals, the parody *en abyme*—Hippolyte manages to exorcise even the dreams he has pursued so avidly, and neither he nor we know whether the account he offers is that of his "real life" or his oneiric biography. In fact, at the end, when Hippolyte drowns his book, "enjoying the waning tribulations of subjectivity and the repose of a privacy that is genuine," the author wittily allows us a sketch of the negative possibility, in which the dreams are vivid life, the reality an obscure phantasmagoria.

Of course the book would be even harder to read than it is if the pain and effort of the Negative were omitted. And it is not so easy to write about "love playing with itself," as Hegel calls it, that it can be done—in a novel—without a wrench or even without occasional bad faith. The narrator often forgets his admonition to himself ("I should like to describe my life to you with the same evenness that one recounts one's dreams") and actually *entertains*. Had he succeeded (failed to entertain), the book would not exist at all, or at least we could not read it, so we may be grateful for our unjustified diversion: like Mallarmé's poems, this novel is the imperfection of its method, not its result.

Such a book is not a story (a story cannot exist without at least the superstition of history), not even an allegory (for nothing here means anything more than what it is): it is an image, a metaphor in the form of a memoir. I suspect that the author required her fussy, arid tone ("For me, the very advent of myself suggested the problem of my own dissolution") as she needed her international-style conventions, as ballast for her revolutionary effort to produce an emblem of the possibility of a life in the body unmediated by Culture: androgynous, messy, funny, profound.

The Sun's Attendant is a much more difficult book than its tidy chapter legends, its neat diptych structure (Left Panel, Hinges, Right Panel) would suggest, unless the very apparatus of order suggests difficulty in fiction. The title, however, and the orderly procession around the ecliptic (Summer Solstice, Aphelion, Autumn Equinox, Winter Solstice, Peri-

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helion and Vernal Equinox) offer a clue: we are to regard this narrative as a version of natural process, a cycle, an orbit long since on record and, however outrageous its demands or its gifts, inevitable.

The Left Panel consists of a notebook kept by the narrator and hero, Stefan Brückmann (Bridge-man: all the elements in Haldeman's novel are "totally organized"; expressive occasions are observed—names of characters, symbolic decor, parodies of individual style—that are generally unremarked in conventional fiction). The notebook is a self-conscious, "modern" and chronologically oblique journal of a half-Gypsy youth forced through the hell of the German concentration camps, miraculously surviving into post-adolescence, and adopted by a Rousseauian American infantryman nicknamed "Moon" (for the Sun's Attendant, this should be warning enough). This first Panel concludes with Stefan's American wanderings—the Moonshine having been occulted by a characteristic act of sexual violence (and suicide) to which I shall return. We are to understand the Left Panel, I take it, as the palmists say we are to understand our left hand—as what is *given*. The narrator says, at its end:

> I've played this game long enough now. Whatever comes from here on will have to put itself in my way—it's not going to overtake me from behind.

The brief central Hinges section consists of letters, diaries, clippings, a poem, fragments of a lecture—all synthesizing a kind of Theory of Germany, using crystallizations of the narrator's experience toward a more general philosophical understanding of his situation in the ensuing Right Panel: study in Heidelberg, an affair with the widow of a celebrated young German Poet (Paul Speer=spear, an offensive weapon) who has committed suicide the previous year (1955), a trajectory through a hideous yet somehow funny and always real landscape of German intellectuals, monsters and misfits all trapped in their history. For all its horrors, Haldeman has been able to mediate the Apocalypse: we have the sense of how young German intellectuals—like Hochhuth, say—have led their spooky lives, against the grain of a society cemented together by guilt and gullibility and great financial gains.

Symmetrical to the noble savagery of the American hegira at the end of the Left Panel (and certainly the author marks the conclusions of his structure spatially, not temporally) is a long, puzzling but very beautiful third-person Gypsy narrative at the end of the Right one. By it, Stefan finally crosses the bridge of himself back to his origins, the source of his feelings in a Romansh heritage—he even recovers his (ap-

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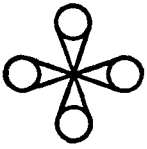

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THIS edition of **Eugene Onegin** may well become the definitive version in English of Pushkin's masterpiece. Besides the translation by Vladimir Nabokov — who is famous for his novels both in Russian and in English — it also includes a detailed and far-ranging commentary by the translator and a reproduction of the complete Russian text.

Volume 1 contains the translation, which is the first literal rendering of **Eugene Onegin** into English. While reproducing Pushkin's meanings faithfully, Nabokov retains the stanza form of the original.

Volumes 2 and 3 are devoted to Nabokov's full-scale commentary, which explains obscurities, traces literary influences, relates **Onegin** to Pushkin's other work, and presents a host of interesting details about the poem and the Russia it depicts. It also gives lines and stanzas deleted by the censor or by Pushkin himself, and variant passages from Pushkin's notebooks.

Volume 4 reproduces, in full, the 1837 Russian edition — the last to appear in Pushkin's lifetime — from which the translation was made.

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parently obscene) Gypsy name, Murshkar, and with this gesture in the direction of a redeemed if not retrieved sexuality, a completion of selfhood, the novel releases us, the diptych completed, nothing resolved, though everything, as in a painting, *represented.*

My only quarrel with the book is that in both panels, radical evil—not the evil of the gas chambers, nor the evil of modern social life in all its banality, the evil Wordsworth describes in the London crowd:

> The slaves unrespited of low pursuits,
> Living amid the same perpetual flow
> Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
> To one identity, by differences
> That have no law, no meaning, and no end

—but rather the evil that comes from *within* the self, the private evil, is identified by the emblem of sexual heterodoxy: Moon's damnation, like that of Paul Speer, and even like Barbara Speer's, is that the self has tried to evade the agony of incommunication by sexual means, has tried, unforgiveably, To Sleep With Stefan! In a book whose imagery is elsewhere so finely administered, I find it difficult to acknowledge—amid the desolation of the environing, still-smoking death camps—the validity of this image of homosexuality as wrong-heartedness. The *noli me tangere* view of the sexual event is too suspect for us to credit its sanctity nowadays—in Lawrence, in Salinger, here.

In design, though, and in the expression of that design through feeling, *The Sun's Attendant* is a splendid achievement—though first published in England, it is, astonishingly, by an American—and I cannot decide whether it is more flattering to the author to assert that one needs no more proof of his gifts than to reread it, or that one wonders what he will do next, with a confident impatience. The only American novel I know which offers an equivalent achievement: the orbit of a self—limited, unavailing, absurd—also managing to offer the theory of a whole people, the ideology of a doomed culture—is Glenway Wescott's *The Grandmothers.* Such books are the mirrors of a literature.

Richard Howard

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SEMANTICS MADE EASY

SYMBOL, STATUS, AND PERSONALITY. By S. I. Hayakawa. Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. $4.50.

S. I. Hayakawa, the most articulate popularizer of "general semantics," has had a considerable influence on educators and so his latest book—a series of fourteen essays that apply Korzybski's theories to some of the social and cultural problems they were meant to solve—is worth serious attention. In terms that are pretty familiar by now, Hayakawa explains that "Korzybski proposed his general semantics as a discipline in extensional orientation"—in, that is, "the habit of orienting oneself in terms of the nonverbal realities for which words presumably stand, to which words are often an imperfect guide, and from which we are too often shielded by verbal smoke screens." Korzybski said that in the "extensional world," the world as presented to us by our nervous systems, no two objects or events are ever genuinely identical, though our use of language depends on the dangerous pretense that they fall neatly into discrete classes; only in the sciences have we escaped the rigid categories into which language normally forces our thought and attained an infinite flexibility of mind that can properly be called realistic. Therefore "the orientations of science are simply the orientations of sanity," Hayakawa tells us; "this is the meaning of the title of Korzybski's book *Science and Sanity*."

Now anybody with such a view of language has a lot to explain—much more than I can even hint at here. But for general semantics, as for other sorts of scientism, the most serious difficulties are perhaps the ones that present themselves if we try to justify value judgments and to show where we get the standards to make them. Of course we need not do this, but Korzybski did and so for him these difficulties are real and central. He thought that all real knowledge comes from direct, silent sensory contact with the extensional world "at the nonverbal level," and that languages at best are just vast filing systems; yet his emphasis, as Hayakawa says, was "on education and mental hygiene"—precisely, that is, on providing the kind of cultural standards it is most difficult to imagine absorbing from the environment passively and wordlessly. But he and his followers have always maintained that we did or at least could absorb them in that way: Stuart Chase once remarked that though Korzybski "often indicates a standard of judgment which we have long associated with toleration toward our fellow creatures and kindness in

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our treatment of them," he does so only "because it is the conclusion which the facts seem to warrant."

The first two essays in this collection explain general semantics by elaborating the distinction between word-mindedness and fact-mindedness, between the rigidity encouraged by language and the flexibility to be learnt from simply observing the variety of the extensional world; and since one important sort of flexibility is the ability to listen fairly to other people, the third essay sensibly tells us that we should always "refrain from agreement or disagreement with a speaker, . . . from praise or censure of his views, until we are sure what those views are." But in the next two longer and more ambitious essays, listening fairly becomes learning "to listen 'nonevaluatively,' which means listening without passing judgments"; the end in view is now "a benign cycle of mutual relaxation of tensions," and there is no longer any implication that after we have understood we are free to judge. This shift in emphasis is a consequence of Hayakawa's belief that if we are to become self-actualizing, fully functioning and creative, we must be extensional, "open to the uniqueness of every object and event" and experiencing the world *"at lower levels of abstraction"*—i.e. more directly—than most

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people. Not only a generally sunny view of things but "morality and ethics" as well, will then "come naturally." Of course this is nonsense: there is no more (and no less) reason why knowing that every object and event is unique should make us feel the world is "vivid with potentialities" than that it should evoke a vision of chaos, as Pearson's *Grammar of Science* did in Henry Adams. Summing up, Hayakawa quotes approvingly from A. H. Maslow:

> As the child looks out upon the world with wide, uncritical and innocent eyes, simply noting and observing what is the case, without either arguing the matter or demanding that it be otherwise, so does the self-actualizing person look upon human nature both in himself and others.

The next essay recommends this way of looking at the world to Negroes. "Negroes simply cannot lose" since "progress is inevitable," and so what usually passes for Southern ill-will really exists only "at the level of words" not of facts; the whole secret "is to forget as far as possible that one is Negro," a fact whites would gladly forget too, and will forget when Negroes learn to "act as the white man's psychotherapist." "If you expect too much of them . . . you will be running into daily disappointments. If, however, your expectations are realistic —in other words, if you expect four out of five white persons to be pretty ignorant on the subject [of Negroes]—then you will be delighted when the score for a given day turns out to be only three out of five." This breezy advice evidently follows from Korzybski's principle that "minimum expectation" is "the basis of happiness." To make only the most obvious criticism: Hayakawa does not see that if some progress is indeed inevitable in civil rights, it is largely because some Negroes have had the physical and moral courage and the political sense to behave quite unextensionally.

So in ethical and social matters the extensional attitude seems to amount to a passive, mutedly optimistic faith in "history." Next come two essays, predictably, on status symbols and advertising, and one, surprisingly, on the philosophy of law (we must "come to terms with society-as-process" and not try to "escape into a never-never land of Eternal Verities"). Then two essays on art show us that be to extensional in esthetic matters means about the same as it does in ethical ones. Somewhere between 1800 and 1900, artists, like scientists, sensed "the bankruptcy of the traditional abstractions" and began "creating and exploring the possibilities of novel symbol-systems" which, by substituting "the dynamic for the static," created images that convey more

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adequately "the feel of modern visual experience." Until then "the old orientation," which depended on "fixed definitions and categories," provided "a system of static evaluations," but this suddenly "has been rendered obsolete" by the Industrial Revolution, Einstein, etc. Since everything is now revealed as dynamic and fluid, "every way of abstracting produces its own kind of truth, which, in the hands of one who orders his abstractions well, results in its own kind of beauty." And more of the same. In spite of the stress laid by general semantics on the care with which abstractions must be constantly referred to the external world, Hayakawa never offers any examples to show what he means by "the static" and "the dynamic," or what "modern visual experience" might be, or how, under the new dispensation, we are to tell which abstractions are ordered "well" and which not.

Therefore when in two of the three remaining essays he tells us that the scientific objectivity of general semantics implies both a "profound sense of social responsibility" and an ability "to evaluate the relative merit of cultures," it is hard to believe him. Earlier, quoting another of his authorities, he told us that for the extensionally oriented person "the locus of evaluation is in the self," and added:

> It isn't what teachers think, it isn't what the Ph.D. committee thinks, it isn't what the neighbors think, it's what *I* think. Because the fully functioning person's experiences, past and present, are accessible to awareness, because he sees freshly and *without rigid categorizing or labeling of the situation* before him, he ultimately is his own judge of what is the needed solution for any given problem.

But by now we want to challenge that triumphantly independent "It's what *I* think" by asking just who or what this "I" is and what credentials it has to pass judgment on any of the matters of serious public interest that general semantics concerns itself with. The book shows quite clearly that sustained appreciative contact with the extensional world can't provide such credentials. Nor, despite Hayakawa's praise for "the habit of critical reading," does such contact seem to have provided the means or the desire to question the crude version of intellectual history he has absorbed from Korzybski and others. To give just one example: for twenty-five years now Hayakawa has evidently believed what Korzybski asserted, without evidence, about Plato and Aristotle, the arch-villains of "the old orientation"—that is, of pre-Korzybskian Western Thought. At this late date, apparently speaking of the theory of forms, he can tell us glibly that "Plato hit upon a formula . . . for the complete arrest

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of human curiosity and intelligence." How could anybody say this who had read just one major Platonic dialogue with an open mind and a desire to understand?

It would be unfair not to mention that in this book as in his others Hayakawa unfailingly comes through as a candid, decent, engaging man —particularly in the one essay I've neglected to mention, "The Great Books Idolatry and Other Delusions," which I find the best in the collection. Yet even in that essay his good qualities are obscured by his insistence on justifying them, and the social attitudes that issue from them, in terms of Korzybski's theories. General semantics is supposed to give us techniques for ending arguments and reaching agreements, but even if it's more benign and relaxing than arguing, is it really very interesting to agree that progress is inevitable or that yes, every modern painter is good in his own way? Sometimes argument not agreement is what we want, and anyway, really important agreements, like the ones that led to a community project described in Hayakawa's last essay as an example of "semantics in action," cannot be explained simply as the result of "shared perceptions." Finally (to return to Chase's remark) general semanticists can never convincingly show us which facts, no

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matter how scrupulously observed and checked, "seem to warrant" our adopting their assumptions about the need to cooperate with each other and make the world better. As a philosopher might say, they can't get us from *is* to *ought*. Of course nobody could in the crude terms they propose, but then why not give up the effort?

Hayakawa's good qualities are also hard to keep in mind when one recalls the educational influence I mentioned earlier, not only because of some hair-raising things he has to say about the teaching of English, but also, and more importantly, because of his general lack of intellectual curiosity. It would be odd if anyone so interested in language and its relation to science had read none of the recent philosophy and psychology concerned with language, and no philosophy of science since Bridgman's *The Logic of Modern Physics* (1927). But if Hayakawa has, he keeps it to himself. In fact, much like the sort of person general semantics is most aimed at, he seems not to feel that he must take seriously writers who don't confirm what he already believes, and the sad conclusion is that Korzybski, not Plato, was the one who hit on a formula at last for discouraging curiosity and intelligence.

That formula is simply the doctrine I mentioned earlier that all our knowledge enters through our nervous systems and that language, when it is not positively getting between us and the world, exists merely to classify and categorize, and thus to facilitate the "sharing of perceptions." The central paradox of general semantics is that it seems to say that language and thought are intimately and inevitably bound up with one another, but then turns out to be saying just the opposite. Korzybski, like all evangelists, gives with one hand and takes away with the other: he paints a dire picture of men at the mercy of words, of thought enslaved by language; then, with a flourish, he provides a battery of theories and techniques that miraculously loose the knot and insure salvation. The only real influence of language on thought turns out to be the bad influence it had before we saw the light and returned to a state of passive and uncritical contact with the extensional world. Korzybski and his followers don't see that facts, judgments, standards and inferences are not simply absorbed through our nervous systems but must be recognized or arrived at by creative argument, by critical thought shaped by and actualizing itself in language. And, as Hayakawa's essays show, to discourage such thought and argument is to make it impossible to attain the freedom and flexibility of mind that general semantics seeks. The great danger for the general semanticist is not, as Hayakawa modestly says it is, that he will be tempted "to carry his speculations into fields in which he is no expert"; it is, rather, that his theories, by simplifying the

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relation between thought and language, will encourage precisely the arbitrary and rigid dependence on authority they were devised to prevent.

William Youngren

THE BIG HURRAH

MARK THE GLOVE BOY OR, THE LAST DAYS OF RICHARD NIXON. By Mark Harris. Macmillan. $4.95.

One must speculate, however discomfiting the implication, that many of our best writers feel the Dr. Strangeloves are ascendant (if not yet rampant) and that if their own writing is to have any social efficacy, they must forego the metaphor of fictive form and address themselves to the madness directly. Mailer, Baldwin, Algren, Ellison, Edmund Wilson and George Elliott, among others in past years alone, have eschewed fiction in order to write directly and sometimes movingly on issues and events in the headlines or lurking just behind them. This is not to say we have no fiction grappling urgently with the social and psychic dislocations of our times. Indeed our most exciting new writers —Heller, Pynchon, Purdy and Ken Kesey among them—are dealing precisely with the lunacy menacing us all. Still, there is an increasing temptation for the literary man to turn journalist-polemicist and to bring to that role the intensely personal vision and evocative skills that we hope for in a novelist. If Mark Harris's new book has any value, it is not alone as an extension of his curious and quite special body of fiction but as a splendid instance of the passionate, artful political tract that is more and more with us.

It is a strain to think of a less promising subject for artful inspection than the somber eminence of Richard M. Nixon. Before the Kennedy assassination one could summon a vision of Mr. Nixon hurtling regressively through the 'sixties and 'seventies, running for Mayor of New York ("how long must we bottlefeed these welfare chiselers?") and losing, running for California State Superintendent of Public Instruc-

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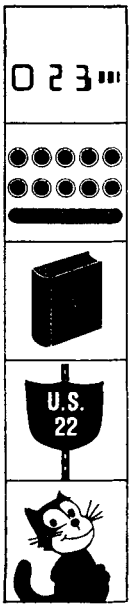
tion ("just what is it these people are teaching our youngsters?") and losing, running for Whittier Town Council ("let us cancel the urban renewal program and each of us do our own housekeeping") and, the ultimate repudiation, losing. But now, as Harris notes on the jacket to this memoir of the Nixon-Brown gubernatorial contest, which was written before Dallas, "the likelihood appears that we shall be required to judge him once more in the year ahead, as we judged him in the nation in 1960 and in California in 1962."

Whether or not we shall have to judge Mr. Nixon again will be decided, fittingly, in California this July, for it is the California backdrop that lends weight to Harris's effort to say something memorable "about American politics, American life, and American feeling along the lines of a grand perspective." California, of course, has become America apotheosized. Our biggest state now, it harbors the best and worst of us in great quantities: the lush vistas and the looted ones, a genuinely aroused social consciousness tilting with virulent political extremism, taste mortally embattled with Goliathan tastelessness—and the overwhelming loneliness amid the multitudes.

Harris set out to cut through political flimflam to the human predicament of two candidates trying to make themselves heard above the din: "I wanted to see what they did with the sweat of the voter's



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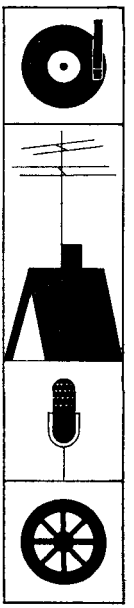

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palm after it had passed to theirs." He was, as *Life* magazine well knew in giving him an assignment to cover the campaign, no ordinary observer; he came to the task with a sizable anti-Nixon bias and thus "kept daily at the scrubbing of my prejudices." But fairness was an ineffective detergent: his prejudices kept being vindicated. Despite his concern that he was too fair, Harris's *Life* article (printed at the end of the book) and the book itself prove as corrosive an indictment of a major political figure as we have—more so than Victor Lasky's artless assault on John Kennedy because there was never any doubt of Lasky's intention.

Few will forget the Herblock cartoon of Nixon during the 1960 Presidential campaign, rising blackbearded and malevolent from a manhole as if to spread some dreadful contagion across the land. (It probably was not included in the gallery of caricatures that Harris saw in the Nixons' Beverly Hills home; I seem to remember, with some sympathy, his being asked how he kept it from his daughters' sight.) But Harris's portrait of Nixon is not a close-up of villainy personified. There is nothing at all said here, for example, about Helen Gahagan Douglas or Jerry Voorhis or the Hughes Tool Co. Rather, Harris found that Nixon's basic problem was, simply, low intellect.

Of all the things Harris heard during the campaign, none was more damning than the remark by a young college professor ghostwriting Nixon's speeches. "He decides the positions he wants to take," the fellow told Harris, "and we find the facts for him." Nixon hardly needed such assistance to clinch Harris's disfavor. To a San Diego crowd, in a state, mind you, that cares fervently about public education, Nixon opened one address: "What are our schools for if not for indoctrination against Communism?" To an outdoor gathering of sportsmen, he promised "the best Communist control of any state in the U.S." Before one Elks Club gathering he linked Communism to "big government" and "big government," in turn, to the administration of Governor Brown; no unmounted elk could miss the syllogism. In contrast to this kind of jousting with genies, Pat Brown was saying things like, "Listen, here's the problem of the average fellow making his living in California: he's growing lettuce in his backyard, and he's asking himself a question—'How am I going to water it, and will a freeway run through it?' "

It was not, Harris insists, merely that the Republicans made him wear a Nixon button when he was covering their camp and that the Democrats didn't care what he wore, or that the Republicans billed him promptly for his travel expenses and the Democrats never did—it was Nixon himself who left Harris reeling with disbelief. In fact Harris never got over the first words Nixon said to him. Harris told him he

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was a professor at San Francisco State; Nixon reflected an instant, then said, "You need a bigger auditorium up there."

John F. Kennedy may have shown us more style than substance during his short time as President, but at least it was exciting having him in the White House. Lyndon Johnson may turn out to have rather more substance than style—not a bad thing perhaps. But Richard Nixon, to judge by *Mark the Glove Boy* (Harris's first job as a boy was delivering gloves), would have given us neither style nor substance; winning was all that seemed to matter to him: "Mr. Nixon was unaware that private success might exist side by side with public loss, for he was of the breed of American Success, whose standard was quantification, election, publicity, the certification of numbers, and the adoration of the majority. He knew no other . . . he possessed no farther vision of the end."

Mark Harris is for vision, not larger auditoriums. And if impartiality eludes him here, he succeeds in suggesting that, once attained, it need not be a virtue.

Richard Kluger

TOO MANY VOICES

THE GIRLS OF SLENDER MEANS. By Muriel Spark. Alfred A. Knopf. $3.95.
SEVEN DAYS OF MOURNING. By L. S. Simckes. Random House. $3.95.

The Girls of Slender Means is a detached, ironic eulogy of a group of gently impoverished, middle class young ladies—rectors' daughters, publishers' assistants, elocution teachers—working in London during the final war months of 1945, and residing at the May of Teck Club, a hostel of Edwardian origin which exists for "the Pecuniary Convenience and Social Protection of Ladies of Slender Means below the age of Thirty years. . . ." Cast in the (approximate) present, in which one of the girls is a successful gossip columnist, another the owner of a thriving model agency, the novel looks back to "long ago in 1945" when "all the nice people [in England] were poor, and few were nicer, as nice people come, than these girls at Kensington who . . . gazed out on the green summer evenings" with a light in their eyes "that re-

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sembled near-genius, but was youth merely." The evocation of the past is triggered by a report of the martyrdom in Haiti of the missionary Nicholas Farringdon, an ex-writer, ex-anarchist, and ex-bisexual, who had been involved both professionally and amorously with the girls at the May of Teck. It is with the intricacies of this involvement and with Nicholas's visionary, almost totally mistaken idealization of this female sub-culture, that the novel is largely concerned.

But, as we learn, the past, which contains the bulk of the novel and all of its dramatic action, is evoked to explain the present. Nicholas's dream of the golden age and ideal society, symbolized by the girls of slender means, is shattered in the denouement of the book, and he converts to Catholicism. A bomb, buried in the Club's garden for three years, explodes, and Nicholas's beautiful lover, Selina Redwood, goes back into the burning house not, as he first thinks, to help rescue some girls trapped in the upper floor, but to save for herself the Schiaparelli taffeta evening dress belonging to another girl but "shared by all the top floor on special occasions." This vision of savagery and evil where he had imagined only loveliness involuntarily causes Nicholas to sign himself with the cross.

There are two voices telling this lustrous, amusing, and poignant tale: the voice of sophistication and the voice of sanctity, neither willing to sacrifice to the other the particular virtues of its own experiential terrain. The result is *not* chaos: the book in no sense is "confused" or myopic. On the contrary, it has an all too studied clarity, it is extraordinarily economical, well-wrought, and lucid. Confusion is avoided by a neat division of artistic labors between the two voices. The *tone* of the novel—amused, ironic, skeptical, poised somewhere between detached condescension and casual involvement—is exclusively that of the *femme du monde,* mingling in comfortable reciprocity with the world, flesh, and devil. But the novel's form—the structuring and patterning of events into that cold, closed circle whereby the present (Farringdon's martyrdom) is used to invoke the past in order to explain and celebrate the present—is determined by the voice of the proselyte.

The result is a conflict of artistic objectives, a clash between the ideology of renunciation and the relish of ironic participation. It makes the book, finally, a piece of moral nonsense. Lacking the passionate commitment of a Hopkins (whom she is fond of quoting) and whose intense celebration of the wonder and terror of life is its own justification, no matter which side of the religious Divide one is on, Miss Spark seeks to persuade (and I suppose to be praised) through the rhetoric not of feeling but of plot manipulation. But though she seeks

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to amuse through her "objectivity" and detachment, she lacks the virtues of the genuinely disinterested skeptic who would follow where truth leads him. She does, after all, have a polemical ax to grind. Christ was forced to choose between the Kingdom of Earth and the Kingdom of Heaven. Miss Spark, wanting both, leaves us ultimately unconvinced of the glory of either.

L. S. Simckes's *Seven Days of Mourning* is a flawed first novel about a family of Lower East Side Jews, the Shimanskys, whose mentally defective youngest daughter has committed suicide before the novel opens, hurling herself from a window to the paved courtyard below. Varda Shimansky, the mother, decides that the family must not mourn the child but forget her entirely. Their refusal to mourn is characteristic of the Shimanskys' lack of compassion for one another, the ramifications of which form the subject of the novel.

The family itself is seen both as a group in grotesque interaction and as a collection of discrete human oddities. Though overly caricatured, they are presented with energy and humor: Varda, the mother, small, plump, and tyrannical, whose cruelty to her husband is "like the garden beetle's sudden turning on her mate and eating him through and through leaving just the empty shell"; Zelo, the husband, would-be seller of newspapers (people take them without paying) who goes about the house in his torn green socks and white underwear ("a disgrace to the family") longing for peace and throwing choking fits when he feels especially abused; Yanina, the married daughter, replica and rival of her mother, toward whom she is both hostile and fearful ("Can't a full grown spider be afraid of its mother?"); Feivel, the son-in-law, the deaf and half-mute fugitive from Bolshevist Russia who considers nothing a misfortune; Pildesh, their four-year-old son, who is imperious and loves to pee a great stream out the window, but is given to nightmares about bugs and has disappearing testicles; and finally Barish, the narrator, Yanina's brother, a self-made cripple (he threw himself down the family stairs), cynic, observer, and trouble-maker who sees through, scares, and yet in his way absolves his uncompassionate household.

The weakness of the book lies in the effort to project this lack of compassion into a quasi-allegoric conflict between the family and a stranger who seeks to reform them. The stranger, who arrives to "make" the family mourn, is Vossen Gleich, an orange-eyed, hump-chested, diminutive "Doctor" of dubious credentials. Part lecher-shyster, part savior-teacher and intrusively sly in both roles, Gleich in his own right has good comical possibilities as a character. But his relation to the

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Shimansky family is both artificial and arbitrary: he is plunked down, quite unbelievably, in the middle of the novel as combination moral spokesman and *deus ex machina* whose purpose is to render the underlying, implicit issues all too explicit and, at the same time, to formalize and resolve the plot. He is manipulated, in short, for both thematic and structural purposes, and the manipulation, which undermines his effectiveness as a character, not only shows but also makes the whole novel unbelievable. He becomes more of a "thing" (a device, a voice, a gimmick) than a person, and the pattern of events focused on him becomes comparably unreal, mechanical, incredible.

Sallie Sears

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